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How the gamelan inspired the composer to look East

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listings inside
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Spirit of the North

Hildur Guðnadóttir

The Oscar-winning Icelandic
composer on why her work is
permeated by darkness

Mood music

The pieces that
can help you
through hard times

Stolen sounds

How a violin seized
by the Nazis has been
brought back to life

Playing the part

Can the great actors
ever master musical
instruments on film?

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his best-known
work 'a joke'?

Michel Legrand:
genius of French
movie music

Donald Runnicles

The conductor's favourite orchestral works

Eleanor Oldroyd

The music that has knocked her for six!

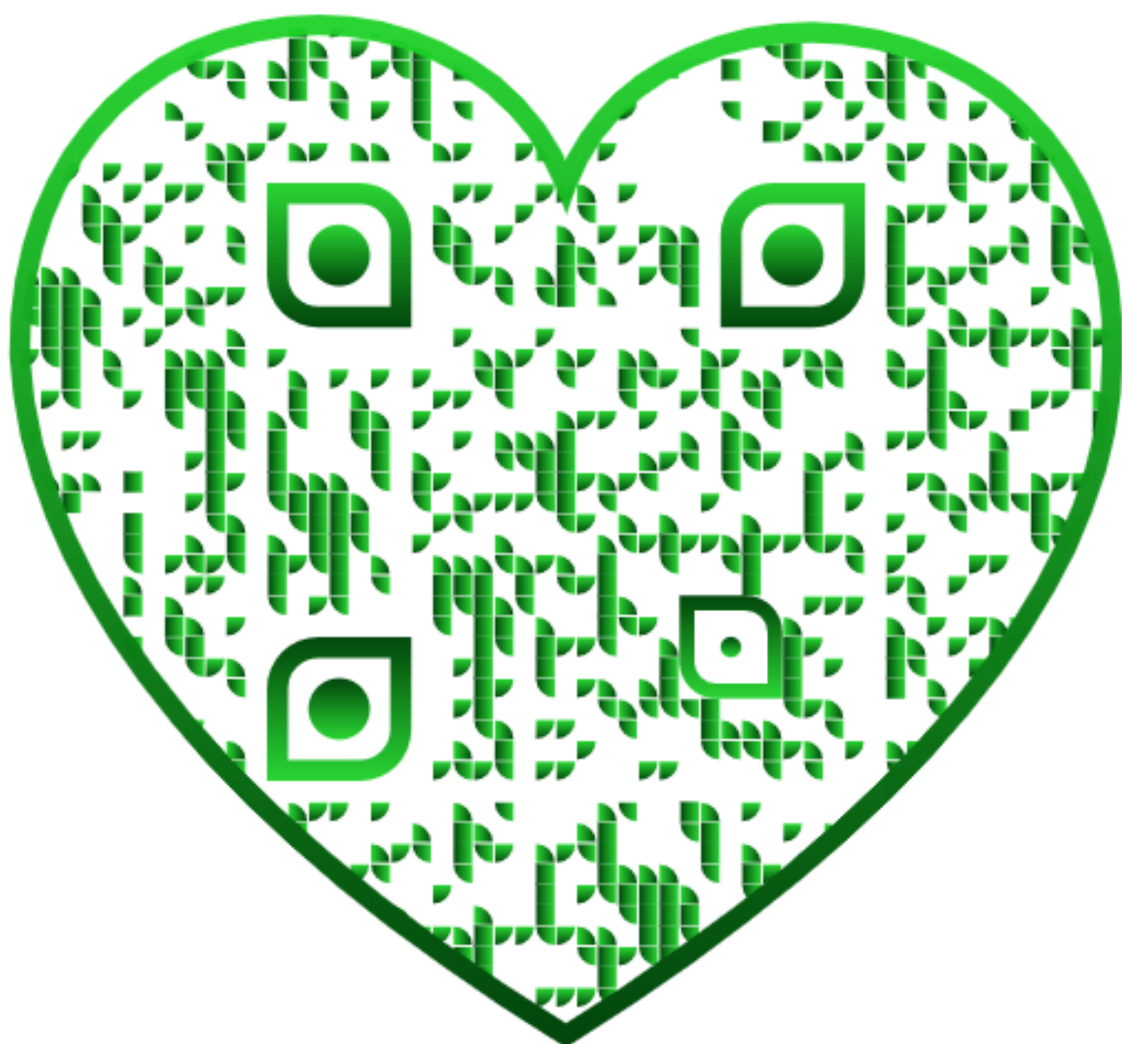
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Welcome



Next year marks the 20th anniversary of Hildur Guðnadóttir's debut solo album, *Mount A*, a milestone the experimental Icelandic cellist and composer will celebrate with live performances featuring friends and colleagues. This spirit of collaborative music-making rather belies the perception of

Guðnadóttir as a private creative talent inspired during solitary walking, biking and driving expeditions – and drawn to all things dark and melancholy. Yet the composer has always been something of a contradiction, captivated equally by classical music, and by rock and electronics.

The two come together especially well in Guðnadóttir's soundtracks for film and television, among them *Tár*, *The Joker* and *Chernobyl*. Still relatively rare as a female composer in this field – and even more so as an Oscar and Golden Globe winner – Guðnadóttir takes her responsibility as a role model seriously. As she tells Claire Jackson on page 24, 'I need to be more visible so that girls can see examples of women writing this type of music.'

In *Tár*, Cate Blanchett portrays a conductor who, like Guðnadóttir, has risen to the top of a male-dominated field. Although Blanchett was praised for her conducting skills, not all screen actors take on the challenge of playing classical musicians so successfully. On page 54, Michael Beek looks at the very best – and worst – examples.

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



Claire Jackson
Music journalist

'Iceland has given us Björk, the world's first female president... and Hildur Guðnadóttir, the first woman composer to simultaneously win an Academy Award, BAFTA and Golden Globe. We talked cellos and coulrophobia.' **Page 24**



Michael White
Journalist and author

'Over lunch in a grand London club, I learned about a violin with an interesting "story" that I would have to travel to a distant European village to pursue. So, feeling like something out of Jules Verne, off I duly went...' **Page 50**



Anne Templer
Writer and percussionist

'Exploring the obstacles of combining childbirth with a musical career has often been seen as a great unspoken embarrassment. It was a privilege to talk to my colleagues about the hurdles they have overcome.' **Page 58**

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BBC
RADIO 3

November Radio 3
highlights
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musician by a film actor (see p54)

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November reviews

Your guide to the best new recordings and books



Isabelle Faust, Kristian Bezuidenhout and Kristin von der Goltz play Bach

72 Recording of the Month



Johann Sebastian Bach Sonatas for Violin & Continuo

'Violinist Isabelle Faust is a splendid guide to this repertoire, not just thoughtful but also on occasion provocative'

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LETTER
of the
MONTH



Warm welcome:
Pavarotti provided a
rehearsal moment
to remember

On stage with Pavarotti

Having first attended a concert by Pavarotti (cover profile; October) in Toronto in 1975, over the following years I went to a number of recitals by him, the last one being in 1990. I was working in the media at that time, had access to the concert hall and was able to be there during his rehearsal and sound check. He was accompanied by a pianist and,

although he did not sing in 'full voice', it was a thrill to be in close proximity to the man I considered to be the greatest tenor of all time. During the rehearsal, he invited the small group of us who were in the hall to come up on stage, and as we stood around the piano, he serenaded us in song. I will never forget that moment, that voice, that man, who was Luciano Pavarotti.

Ed Wolk, Canada

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A legend remembered

Ashutosh Khandekar's warm-hearted article marking Pavarotti's 90th birthday (October) brought back special memories. In the early 1960s, we were gathered around the television, looking forward to hearing Giuseppe di Stefano top the bill on *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*, only for Bruce Forsyth to announce he had been taken ill and would be replaced by a young Italian tenor, Luciano Pavarotti. This shy, very thin young man enchanted us with Puccini. In 1964, our school music O-Level group went to a rehearsal at Glyndebourne of Mozart's *Idomeneo*, and there was the still-slim Pavarotti singing Idamante. Many years later, I interviewed him prior to his visit to Birmingham, and at the end I asked him if he would like to add anything: 'Yes, I'd have liked to have sung in the operas of Michael Tippett'.

*Christopher Morley,
Halesowen*

Fusion hero

Michael Church's otherwise intriguing *Ragas to Riches* article (October) inevitably left much unsaid on the subject of Indian classical music and the West. Its major omission was the Anglo-Indian composer John Mayer. Two years before Yehudi Menuhin's 'celebrated and hugely influential' collaboration with Ravi Shankar, Mayer formed

the Indo-Jazz Fusions with Jamaican saxophonist Joe Harriott, recording three very successful albums featuring a double quintet of jazz and Indian instruments. The group even played the Isle of Wight Rock Festival in 1969. A gifted violinist, Mayer performed with both the London and Royal Philharmonic Orchestras, while continuing to compose music that drew on both Indian and western classical traditions. In 1955, Menuhin performed Mayer's Violin Sonata, while Sir Adrian Boult included Mayer's *Raga Jaijaivanti* in the London Philharmonic Orchestra's repertoire. Sadly, the astonishingly beautiful flute concerto he composed for James Galway is out of print but his Violin Concerto No. 2, 'Sarangi ka Sangit', was recorded by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales in 2020. Mayer revived the Indo-Jazz Fusions in the 1990s, encouraged by students he was teaching at Birmingham Conservatoire, and has left a legacy that is continued by his sitarist-composer son Jonathan, clarinettist Arun Ghosh, saxophonists Jesse Bannister and Idris Rahman and pianist Zoe Rahman.

Duncan Heining, via email

Missing movie

I was slightly surprised when reading *Picture Perfect* (September) that you had

overlooked the use of the *Andante* from Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 21 in the film *Elvira Madigan* (1967). The recording used was by Géza Anda, who played the piano and conducted.

Bernard Steel, via email

Wagner surprise

Wow! I expected to find the names of famous composers in your *Hero or Hype?* article (August) but not the BIG guys. I can just imagine the eruption of my old Philadelphia friend Bud Fried at seeing Wagner in the feature. Bud – real name Irving M Fried; he was the IMF in the famous IMF transmission line speakers of the 1970s – was a no-holds-barred lover of classical music, of which the highest form was opera (he would listen to the

Metropolitan Opera Saturday broadcasts with a libretto in his hands). For him, the highest opera composer was Wagner, of whose music the greatest of all was *Götterdämmerung*. I'll always recall calling him up for advice on whether to purchase a box set of the 1960s Georg Solti, Vienna Opera *Götterdämmerung* recordings. His reply was that was THE recording. I bought it.

Allen Edelstein,
Highland Park, NJ, US

Rock and Troll

I deeply appreciated Joe Matera's *Riffs & Rhapsodies* (July). However, I would like to underline that one of the most relevant attempts to put a classical orchestra and a rock band together is Italian. I am referring to the

celebrated Concerto Grosso by the Argentinian composer Luis Bacalov and the band New Trolls, released in 1971. Through the 1970s, Bacalov went on to realise two more collaborations of the kind – with the hard-rock band Il Rovescio della Medaglia and with the prog-rock band Osanna – and another Concerto Grosso with New Trolls in 1976.

Francesco Bucci, *Lecce, Italy*

Climb every mountain

Arguably no composer paid homage to mountains as thoroughly as Alan Hovhaness. Yet, Hovhaness found no place in your July issue's quiz about mountains. To sample his output: he composed programmatic music about the Appalachians, the

Cascades, Nanga Parbat, Mt Katahdin, Mt Ararat, Mt Everest, Prospect Hill (Maine), the mythical Mt Ravana, Mt Wildcat, Mt Monadnock, Macedonia's mountains, the Green Mountains, Glacier Peak, Blue Job, then also Mounts Belknap, Ossipee, Shasta and Tahoma in a single Op. 299 cycle, and, quite fitting for a 50th-symphony milestone, the eruption of Mount Saint Helens. He further composed about mysterious, holy, prophetic and celestial mountains; mountains without end; mountain idylls; and one 'hymn' and one 'farewell' to mountains. There's even a work about a 'Mountain Under The Sea' (Op. 392).

Cory Anderson,
Millersburg, OH, US

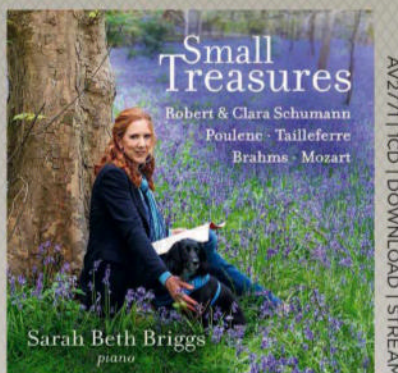


NEW RELEASES FROM AVIE RECORDS



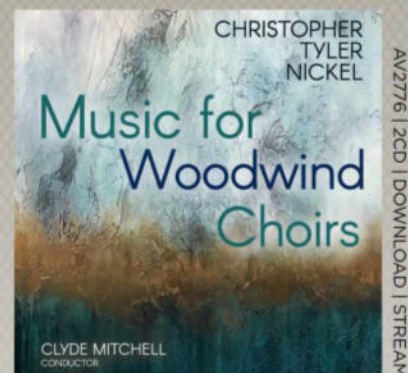
BRUCE WOLOSOFF

Composer-pianist Bruce Wolosoff's new album, *Blue Mantra*, engages in multiple dialogues – between music and visual art, between the blues and chamber music. The three works on the album are scored for clarinet, piano and varied strings.



SARAH BETH BRIGGS

Pianist Sarah Beth Briggs' latest AVIE offering, *Small Treasures*, leads with music by two composers of which her interpretations have been widely praised – Robert Schumann and Johannes Brahms – alongside works by Robert's wife Clara, Poulenc, Tailleferre and Mozart.

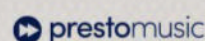
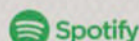
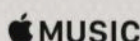


CHRISTOPHER TYLER NICKEL

Canadian composer Christopher Tyler Nickel's penchant for imaginative combinations of instruments translates to his latest release, *Music for Woodwind Choirs*, which includes "Suite for Two Oboes and Two Cors Anglais", and "Symphony for Flute Choir".



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B B C *music*
MAGAZINE

The *full* score

Our pick of the month's news, views and interviews



The trumpet shall sound no more: Alison Balsom has announced her retirement; (right) at the Classic Brits, 2011; receiving her OBE, 2016



A former BBC Radio 3 New Generation Artist, her CV also includes a year as artistic director of the Cheltenham Music Festival, three Classical Brit Awards plus, in 2016, an OBE for services to music. In last month's *BBC Music Magazine*, her fellow trumpeter Matilda

Alison Balsom calls time on career

Last Night of the Proms to be trumpeter's final concert

Trumpeter Alison Balsom has revealed that her recent appearance at the 2025 Last Night of the Proms was her final public performance. During an interview for BBC Radio 4's *This Cultural Life* shortly before the end of this year's Proms season, Balsom explained to presenter John Wilson that, after a 24-year professional career that has seen her win a host of awards and introduce the trumpet to a wide new audience, she plans to give up her busy life of performing and recording to concentrate on her family and leave time for other activities.

Reflecting on life as a musician, Balsom, 47, explained, 'You have to be on the road all the year round. What I've been doing the last couple of years is like doing the Wimbledon final and then... no tennis... and then the French Open final and

then... no tennis. It's not sustainable at that level. I'm really looking forward to not having that constant thing hanging over me, where it is constantly... Is your lip going to be okay? Are you going to have the courage to just walk out in front of 80

'I've followed a particular path and feel that I've come to the end of it'

people and 6,000 people in the audience and the orchestra and just proving yourself time and time again?

As well as playing with leading orchestras across the globe, Balsom has also recorded 17 studio albums, ranging from Baroque concertos to 20th-century composers such as Bernstein and Copland.

Lloyd described Balsom as one of the most influential players in the instrument's history, saying that 'she has paved the way for a new generation of trumpet soloists to follow in her footsteps'.

Balsom's appearance at this year's Last Night of the Proms was her second, having played Haydn's Trumpet Concerto on the big occasion back in 2009. This time round, playing Hummel's Trumpet Concerto was a case of bowing out with a much-loved friend. 'This chance to play the Hummel at the Last Night of the Proms, it feels very final for me,' she reflected. 'I know what I want to say about this piece, but I don't think I'm going to have anything more to say afterwards, about Hummel or about the trumpet... I've followed my particular path, very honestly and with authenticity and I feel that I've come to the end of that path.'



Grave occasions reveal an unexpected taste

Just when you thought it was safe to go back into the graveyard... Data published by a UK funeral company reveals that the *Jaws* theme tune has become a surprise choice for people to be buried to. In the film's 50th-anniversary year, John Williams's hungry shark has risen towards the surface as details from 90,000 services show how

people are choosing to say farewell and adieu to their beloved. 'Music has a powerful way of bringing back memories, reflecting our personalities and connecting us to loved ones,' explains Co-op Funeralcare's MD Gill Stewart about a list whose other unlikely entries include AC/DC's 'Highway to Hell' and 'Ding Dong! The Witch is Dead'.



Ottawa calling: Finnish conductor John Storgårds

Finnish conductor to start at the Centre

The National Arts Centre (NAC) in Ottawa, Canada, has announced that conductor John Storgårds is to be its next music director. The Finn succeeds Alexander Shelley, who will be leaving in the summer of 2026. Storgårds, who is also chief conductor of the BBC Philharmonic and the Turku Philharmonic Orchestra in Finland, knows the NAC Orchestra well, having served as its principal guest conductor since 2015. Nor will the dark, chilly Ottawa winters daunt him – he is also the long-serving artistic director of the Lapland Chamber Orchestra.



E string = MC^2 :
Albert Einstein
indulges his
passion, 1932

Einstein's fiddle set for sale

A violin that Albert Einstein hid away from the Nazis is set to come up for auction this month. It is reckoned that the prized instrument will fetch more than £200,000 when it is sold by Dominic Winter Auctioneers in Cirencester, Gloucestershire, with a book by Descartes and a bicycle saddle that were also owned by the great physicist up for auction too.

Einstein, a keen musician, is believed to have bought the violin soon after it was made in the 1890s. In 1932, when he was leaving Germany for the US, he left it in the safe-keeping of his friend and fellow physicist Max von Laue, who after World War II gave it to Margarete Hommrich, an Einstein enthusiast. Since then, it has remained in Hommrich's family.

Etched on the back of the instrument is the word 'Lina', the name that Einstein gave to all his violins, and it seems likely he played it during the period in which he formulated his Theory of Relativity in the early-20th century. 'It's just incredible to think that this very instrument might have been triggering some of his great ideas while he was playing Mozart or Bach,' says Dominic Winter's senior valuer, Chris Albury. (See also *Stolen strings*, p50).

TIMEPIECE This month in history

The master of 'no invention':
Ravel (centre) joins dancer Ida
Rubinstein and her *Boléro* cast at
Vienna State Opera; (right) Bronislava
Nijinska in *Boléro*, 1928; (below right)
the self-deprecating Ravel



NOVEMBER 1928

Ravel's *Boléro*, a ballet with 'no music', takes to the stage

In 1984, a truncated version of Maurice Ravel's orchestral piece *Boléro* was used to accompany a routine by British ice-dancers Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean at the Sarajevo Winter Olympics. The pair won gold and *Boléro* went global, its seductive rhythms mesmerising a whole new generation of listeners. Four decades later, *Boléro* remains one of the most instantly recognisable pieces of classical music, the work's 'cross-over' popularity entirely undiminished.

And yet the piece came close to never being written. The story begins in April 1928, when Ravel returned to France from a successful tour of the US. At home in Montfort-l'Amaury, a hefty pile of letters awaited. One was from the Russian dancer

Ida Rubinstein, requesting a new work for her to perform: could Ravel possibly orchestrate six pieces from the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz's piano suite *Iberia*? The ballet would premiere at

'Don't you think that this tune has a certain insistence?', asked Ravel

the Paris Opéra, and be choreographed by Bronislava Nijinska, a member of impresario Diaghilev's Ballets Russes.

Ravel readily accepted. It soon emerged, however, that the rights to orchestrate Albéniz's suite belonged to the conductor Enrique Arbós, and Albéniz's

widow refused to authorise a second orchestration. Arbós offered to waive his own rights unilaterally, but by then Ravel had tired of the squabbling. 'My whole summer's ruined,' he declared peevishly. 'Orchestrating *Iberia* was going to be so much fun. What am I going to tell Ida? She'll be furious.'

But a new idea was soon gestating. During a summer break in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, Ravel called a friend to the piano and began picking out a melody with one finger. 'Don't you think this tune has a certain insistence?', he asked. Four years earlier, Ravel had already imagined 'composing a symphonic poem without a subject, where the whole interest will be in the rhythm'. Now, with his 'insistent tune' to hand, that notion came to full fruition, and *Boléro* (Ravel initially called it *Fandango*) was born.

From the beginning, Ravel had a clear idea of what he wanted to do with *Boléro*'s basic melody. 'I'm going to try and repeat it a number of times without any development, gradually increasing the



orchestra as best I can,' he commented. Part one of the tune is played twice, followed by two playings of part two, giving an AABB structure to each section of the piece. The AABB pattern is played four times in total, the tune switching from instrument to instrument, with the orchestra gradually getting louder. A snare-drum figuration – repeated 169 times, without variation – is heard throughout. As the 15-minute crescendo peaks, *Boléro* lurches momentarily into E major, before careering back to its predominant C major for a dramatic finish.

Ravel apparently wanted the new ballet to be set in a factory: he was fascinated by machines and gadgetry, and *Boléro*'s mechanistic rhythms undoubtedly reflect this. But choreographer Nijinska had other ideas, and her setting was 'a badly lit tavern', where a woman dances on a table, inciting those drinking in the bar to gradually 'surround the table' and 'go wild around the dancer'.

This is the scenario which audiences witnessed at *Boléro*'s premiere at the Paris Opéra on 22 November 1928. Ravel himself was not present, but saw the fourth and final performance on 4 December. He judged it 'excellent' but unacceptably

'picturesque' – another indication that he had something more minimalist and modern-looking in mind when composing the music. The verdict on *Boléro* was, though, overwhelmingly positive. The first-night audience loved it, and Ravel's music quickly took on a life of its own, appearing in piano arrangements and gaining numerous performances as a free-standing concert work.

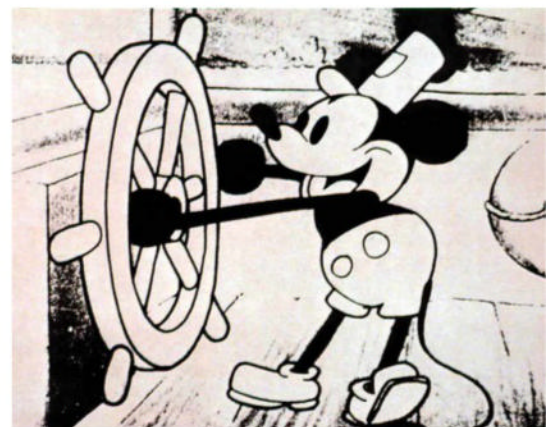
Ravel himself, however, was curiously diffident, even disparaging, about *Boléro*, regularly tamping down the popular enthusiasm surrounding it. It consisted 'wholly of orchestral texture without music', he told the *Daily Telegraph* in 1931. 'There is practically no invention except in the plan and the manner of the execution.' To the composer Honegger, he joked, 'I've written only one masterpiece – *Boléro*. Unfortunately, there's no music in it.'



Commentators on *Boléro* have, nonetheless, regularly attempted to find deeper meanings in the music. Does it parody the dehumanising nature of industrial society, or act as a metaphor for sexual activity? Do its pulsing rhythms and slow-motion linear development anticipate minimalist techniques of half a century later? Ravel would probably have smiled wryly at such speculations. The evening before he died, he tuned in to a performance of *Boléro* on the radio, and started laughing. 'Ah!', he said. 'When I think what a good joke I played on the musical world!' **Terry Blain**



Lasting appeal: *Boléro* is staged at Hungarian State Opera, 2011



Film first: Mickey Mouse in *Steamboat Willie*

Also in November 1928...

6th: The Republican Party's **Herbert Hoover** is elected president of the US, defeating Al Smith by 444 electoral votes to 87, a landslide that sees the Democratic Party candidate losing even in his home state of New York. Before taking up office in the new year, Hoover sets off on a goodwill tour of Latin American countries.

7th: Opera singer **Mattia Battistini** dies in Rieti, central Italy, aged 72. Dubbed the 'King of the Baritones', Battistini enjoyed a far-flung career that brought him enormous popularity well beyond his Italian homeland. After launching his career in South America and then establishing himself across Europe, from 1892 he became a firm favourite in Saint Petersburg and Moscow, performing in Russia for 23 seasons in total.

18th: **Mickey** and **Minnie Mouse** make their first public appearance with the release of the Walt Disney short animated film *Steamboat Willie*. The film's technical innovations include the first ever use of a clicktrack on the film print when recording the orchestral soundtrack, to ensure that musical effects coincide precisely with the visual gags.

25th: An orchestral arrangement of the song 'Tea for Two' from the Vincent Youmans musical *No, No, Nanette*, **Shostakovich's** *Tahiti Trot* is premiered at the Moscow Conservatory. The work has come about as a result of a bet between Shostakovich and conductor Nikolai Malko, who challenged the composer to memorise the song and orchestrate it within an hour. Malko himself conducts the premiere.

30th: The French Chamber of Deputies passes a military budget bill aimed at making the **French army** the biggest in the world. Over the next seven years, a series of 12-month conscriptions sees around 225,000 soldiers being trained per year, in addition to the 100,000-man regular army. In terms of creating an effective fighting force, however, the recruitment drive is not hugely effective.

Music to my ears



Bird in flight: Benedetti recorded *The Lark* in 2007

The *BBC Music Magazine* team's current favourites...

Charlotte Smith *Editor*

A trip to see Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* at Glyndebourne was a real treat – thrillingly performed by a talented cast including sopranos Louise Alder and Johanna Wallroth. The Count's final plea for forgiveness was given extra poignancy by the recent death of baritone Huw Montague Rendall's father, David Rendall, who had made his official stage debut at Glyndebourne in 1975. Montague Rendall was visibly moved as he took his bow – as was the audience, who joined in thunderous applause.

Jeremy Pound *Deputy editor*

So often we hear a new work once at its premiere... and then never again. Frustrating? Yes. So, I could have no complaints when, in the World Premiere Round of the Banff International String Quartet Competition, we were treated to nine renditions – one from each competing quartet – of *Kati Agócs's Rapprochement*. It's a fine piece with a mesmerising soundworld, broken briefly by a jaunty folklike melody. My favourite performance came from the Arete Quartet from Seoul – keep an eye out for them.

Steve Wright *Content producer*

I'm totally gripped by British composer *Dorothy Howell's* 1919 tone poem *Lamia*. Lush and late-Romantic, it has echoes of Liszt and Strauss, perhaps – but there's a distinctly English soundworld too. Howell paints Keats's seductive, tragic serpent-woman in sweeping orchestral colours. A Proms favourite during the 1920s and '30s, *Lamia* then slipped from view until it was reprogrammed in 2010.

Miranda Bardsley *Reviews editor*

A listen to Nicola Benedetti's recording of Beethoven's Violin Concerto with Aurora Orchestra – released earlier this year – prompted me to go on a deep dive through her discography, all the way to her 2007 recording of *Vaughan Williams's The Lark Ascending* with the LPO. This month, I've been listening to it on repeat. Benedetti's delicate but determined playing perfectly captures the skylark's flight.

Family connection:
Kitty Whately enjoys
collaborating with
her actor parents



Concert Heaven Concert Hell

Top artists recall their best and worst performances

THIS MONTH

Kitty Whately *mezzo-soprano*

CONCERT HEAVEN

Careful the tale you tell

Kitty Whately (mezzo-soprano), Simon Lepper (piano) et al

Wigmore Hall (December 2020)

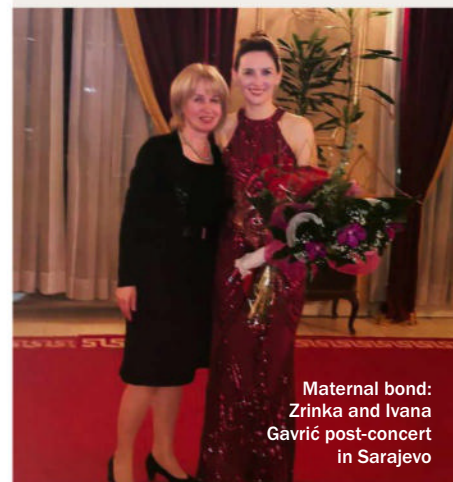
My 'Concert Heaven' choice is a recital called 'Careful the tale you tell' with my parents, Kevin Whately and Madelaine Newton, who are actors, and the pianist Simon Lepper. It was about fairy tales, and my parents were reading poetry that complemented the songs.

Obviously, we hadn't been performing much in the months running up to this, in 2020, when so many gigs were cancelled. Being on stage with my parents and being able to make

music after such a long time made this concert really special.

It was also very strange as there was no audience in the Wigmore Hall. John Gilhooly, who runs the hall, was the only person in the audience. It sort of felt like a 70-minute audition. I would usually really engage with the audience and, with this fairy-tale programme, tell them the stories, so I had to do that to a lot of empty chairs. I remember one festival actually put photos of people all over the chairs, so it looked like an audience.

We had to be socially distanced for the recital, so Simon had his husband, Kevin, page-turning for him – they were a bubble. My parents were in a bubble, but I don't live with them, so we had to keep our distance even on stage. We couldn't rehearse together, so we talked



a lot on Zoom about the repertoire and poetry, and I think we'd done the recital somewhere else pre-Covid.

The repertoire included Jonathan Dove's *The Siren*, which I think is a masterpiece, Stanford's really dramatic *La belle dame sans merci*, a Judith Weir song about a girl taken away by the fairies from *Songs from the Exotic*, Rebecca Clarke's *The Seal Man* and Sondheim from *Into the Woods*.

It felt really moving to do. There were a couple of moments I got a bit choked up and quite tearful. I always love doing these performances with my parents – they're so brilliant at it. I know they're proud of me, and I felt as proud of them. We felt proud to be presenting each other and to be sharing that stage, and I felt so privileged to have that opportunity.

CONCERT HELL

JS Bach Mass in B minor

Kitty Whately; Scottish Chamber Orchestra/Jonathan Cohen
Queen's Hall, Edinburgh (December 2013)
The concert that comes to mind immediately is the Bach Mass in B minor with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in 2013 with the conductor Jonathan Cohen, who stepped in at the last minute as Richard Egarr was ill. I don't know what happened to my brain, but I just was not coping. I had a total meltdown. I've recently been diagnosed with ADHD, as have so many musicians, and it sheds a lot of light on my past. Something that's been a pattern for me has been being so prepared

for something and yet turning up and performing like I've never seen it before. This was an example of that.

I was quite new to the industry, and I was on the BBC New Generation Artists scheme. I had worked so hard to learn and prepare my part, and I had taken it to coaches and practised and practised. I knew it like the back of my hand, but I turned up and anybody who was there would have thought, why hasn't this girl done her homework? I was totally breathless and couldn't sing. Mainly, I just couldn't keep my place in the music. My eyes just swam. The more mistakes I made, the worse it got.

I was working with the soprano Lorna Anderson, who was so lovely to me between the rehearsal and concert. She tried to calm me down, saying you just need to breathe and that you know you've done the work. She plied with me chocolate. I will never forget her kindness. But I still just completely panicked, particularly in the really famous mezzo aria. It reached the point where I got so lost that Jonathan had to turn round, in the live performance, and sing my bit to me to get me back on track. I was mortified. Everyone else did brilliantly. Everybody played and sang well. I just deserved to be sacked. I've never forgotten it. Every time I see Jonathan Cohen's name written down, I think, 'I hope he's forgotten.'
Kitty Whately's album 'Rebecca Clarke: The Complete Songs' is out on Signum Classics on 7 November; Whately appears at Wigmore Hall on 8 November

MyHero



Ivana Gavrić salutes her mother, and fellow pianist, **Zrinka Gavrić** for setting her on the path to her own concert career

My mum was active as a pianist when I was a child living in Sarajevo, and I'd spend many hours listening to her practise. She would play a lot of Ravel, Debussy préludes and Prokofiev sonatas, and because these early-20th-century composers are what I was exposed to, they are in my blood.

She also introduced to me the reality of being a musician. I would go to her concerts – for a four year-old, it's quite something to see your mum on stage – and we would also go to the opera and ballet a lot, which made a massive impression on me. The spectacle and sheer size of it all was one thing, but then we would also get to go backstage where we would meet the performers and touch the sparkly costumes, which was amazing.

Mum never officially taught me the piano herself, but she orchestrated everything including the nightmare of having to get me from A to B for lessons at music school on the far side of town. Through her, too, I have a connection to very important musical figures of the 20th century. She was a pupil of Matusja Blum, who pretty much single-handedly raised the bar of piano playing in the Balkans, and she also went to study at the Moscow Conservatoire, where she got to play to Khachaturian, another composer who is very important to me.

Our careers never overlapped, but we have both played in Sarajevo with the same orchestra, in the same hall and, dare I say it, on the same piano... 30 years apart! I reckon this is one of the only instances of a mother and daughter having done this! *Featuring Grieg, Ravel, Pejačević and others, Ivana Gavrić's 'Throwback to Dance' album is released on 21 November*

An environmental force



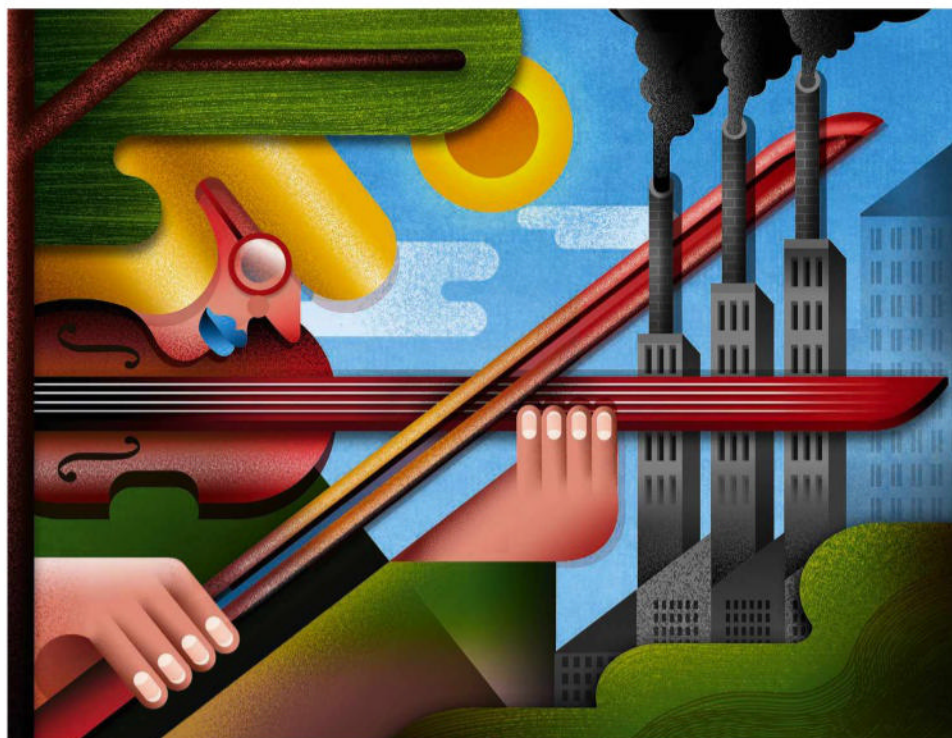
As he relives a memorable evening at the BBC Proms, **Tom Service** ponders how music might make us reconsider our relationship with the world around us

ILLUSTRATION: MARIA CORTE MAIDAGAN

It's the only question about music that really matters, even if it draws wildly different answers: can music change our lives? Yes, it can! It brings everything from social cohesion to harmony between nations; it improves maths scores, adds billions to the economy, and inspires our souls, spirits and intellects. Or... no it can't! It's auditory cheesecake of no evolutionary importance; it's gloriously, aesthetically and emotionally powerful, but ultimately pointless, nothing more than an – admittedly engrossing – form of distraction.

But what if there was even more at stake: what if music could transform our relationship with the earth that sustains us? For composer Gabriella Smith, who also works as a climate restorer in her native California, a piece like her organ concerto, *Breathing Forests*, which had its British premiere at the BBC Proms this summer, isn't just a metaphorical vision of the life-cycles of forests turned into musical form. For Smith, her music is a call to action.

The shape of *Breathing Forests*, in which a forest grows, breathes and burns, is, she says, 'a reflection on the complex relationship between humans, forests, climate change and fire'. Fire isn't only the devastating, climate change-induced infernos of recent years; it's also a vital, life-giving force of forest regeneration. The concerto ended with a breathtaking sound of hopefulness at the Proms, a gigantic, blazing radiance of major-key resolution; the forest of the orchestra



and organ, and the physicality of the Royal Albert Hall, renewed.

The power of that moment, and the extremes of texture, volume and dissonance of organist James McVinnie's performance with the BBC Symphony Orchestra were

For Gabriella Smith, her organ concerto *Breathing Forests* is a call to action

unforgettable. So what do we do with those memories and feelings, with that sense of connection to such powerful musical forces? They could become souvenirs of just another wonderful night at the Proms; they could open up journeys of exploration to hear more of Smith's music; they could introduce you to repertoires of organ-inspired adventure that McVinnie has pioneered.

But their power could go deeper. Maybe the sense of becoming part of these *Breathing Forests* of sound makes you think about the literal forests and elements of the earth that the instruments of the orchestra are made from. Perhaps you reflect on what that sense of being taken over by this music means: that it's a revelation of our mutual interdependence, with each other as human beings and with every other species on earth, along with the planet's climate and its geology.

That means we have a responsibility to look after every aspect of the world's biomes, whether ecological or musical. Maybe, just maybe, that's how a piece of music could start to change the world – one consciousness at a time. 🌱



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FAREWELL TO...

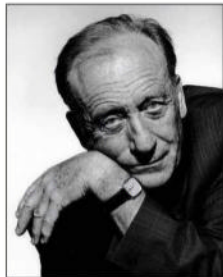


Cleveland legend:
Christoph von
Dohnányi in 2016

Christoph von Dohnányi Born 1929 *Conductor*

Born in Berlin, Christoph von Dohnányi came from an exceptional family. His grandfather was the great Hungarian composer Ernst von Dohnányi, and his father Hans, a juror, and mother Christine were leading members of the resistance movement against the Nazis – Hans was executed in 1945 along with Christine's brother, the pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Christoph would go on to make his own mark, but as a conductor, and in particular as the music director of the Cleveland Orchestra from 1984 to 2002, taking the American ensemble to a new level of excellence and increasing its profile by recording regularly and touring widely, especially in Europe. It was also during this period that, with Dohnányi as a driving force, the orchestra's famous Severance Hall underwent a major renovation. Beyond Cleveland, his other posts included that of principal conductor of the Philharmonia Orchestra in London from 1997 to 2008, and he was a regular at the world's leading opera houses. It was, in fact, in Germany's opera houses that he first enjoyed his rise to prominence, and while Austro-German composers lay at the heart of his repertoire, from Mozart right through to Schoenberg and Henze, he mastered much besides.

Rodion Shchedrin Born 1932 *Composer and pianist*



Throughout his life, Rodion Shchedrin (left) enjoyed significant status in his home country, both in the Soviet Union and then in Russia – in a 2014 interview, the then prime minister Vladimir Putin cited him alongside Gavrilin and Sviridov as three composers who had brought Russian classical music into the modern era. A significant factor in his standing in the Soviet era lay in his marriage to Maya Plisetskaya, one of the great Russian ballet dancers of her age,

and Shchedrin himself wrote regularly for the ballet stage, including adaptations of works by the great Russian novelists. However, he was no stranger to the West either. Among those who commissioned significant works from him were Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the BBC Proms, which premiered his 'Four Russian Songs' in 1998. He also spent large periods working and living in western Europe. His composing style, meanwhile, was notoriously hard to pin down, ranging from austere and dissonant to occasionally melodious and, quite often, quirkily avant-garde. That quirkiness extended to a political persona that combined writing an oratorio extolling Lenin and enjoying significant influence in senior Soviet musical circles with openly refusing, in 1968, to condone his country's invasion of Czechoslovakia.

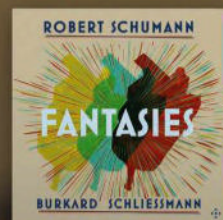
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THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

Pick a theme... and name your seven favourite examples

Scottish conductor **Donald Runnicles** selects some of the best examples of British orchestral repertoire

Sir Donald Runnicles studied at the University of Edinburgh and St John's College, Cambridge, before beginning his career as a singers' coach and assistant conductor in Mannheim, Germany. He has been music director and principal conductor of the San Francisco Opera, music director of the Grand Teton Music Festival in Wyoming, US, and chief conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. This autumn, he begins his tenure as chief conductor of the Dresden Philharmonic, launching the season with a British Festival highlighting leading artists and compositions from the UK.



a mystical, magical space. It's a cathedral of sound, with a geographic element to it: some of the music sounds as if it's coming from behind you, some from the nave, and some seems to be coming from above. But at the same time, it feels like a deeply personal work.

Gustav Holst *The Planets*

The Planets is rightly one of the pillars of British music and one of the most popular pieces for both audiences and orchestras. It's so well orchestrated and each movement is an extraordinary depiction of not just an object but a feeling and a personality – you can almost imagine these planets as human beings. Jupiter brims with joy, Venus features some of the most serene music in the world and, as a whole, the piece exudes a sense of mystery and timelessness. That you'll often hear snippets of it in many different contexts is testament to its brilliance.

Vaughan Williams

Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis

There's a reason this piece is consistently in Classic FM radio station's top ten. I've performed it fairly frequently and it continues to take my breath away. You really do feel, with those first ethereal G major chords, that you have entered

Britten *War Requiem*

I performed this work in my most recent concert in Dresden with the Dresden Philharmonic, on 13 February this year – the anniversary of the firebombing of the city – and to bring this piece there was profoundly significant. I find its power – and, sadly, its continuing relevance – astonishing. The idea of combining the timelessness of the Latin Mass with the brutal specificity of Wilfred Owen's poetry is remarkable. In lesser hands, such a juxtaposition might jar, but here it becomes something heartbreakingly sad and, at the same time, deeply beautiful.

James MacMillan *Symphony No. 4*

I have admired James MacMillan's music throughout my career. He wrote this symphony for a rather significant birthday of mine in 2015, and what I love is the way it intertwines the modern with the ancient. Haunting themes emerge out of a modern soundscape, and you feel as though you are standing on a Scottish moor, listening to music that feels ancient and primitive. Premiering it at the BBC Proms ten years ago was incredibly moving, and I'm looking forward to bringing it to Dresden this season, when James joins us as composer-in-residence.



Elgar *Cello Concerto*

Edward Elgar was, it seems, someone who rarely experienced happiness. He struggled with depression and with the British sense of inferiority in an orchestral world dominated by Richard Strauss and Mahler. I hear all of this in the Cello Concerto. It is a deeply personal work, offering a glimpse into a glorious yet troubled mind, filled with quiet anguish and self-doubt – feelings we all recognise. The music sublimates this pain so movingly it can bring you to tears, saying what words cannot. And, as with Britten, what is left unsaid feels as powerful as what is expressed.

Vaughan Williams *Symphony No. 5*

This symphony is remarkable, not least because it was written during one of the darkest periods in Britain's history – the early 1940s, when there was little sense that we would emerge victorious from the Second World War. Vaughan Williams, who had served as an ambulance driver on the front lines during the First World War, was acutely aware of the horror and brutality of conflict, and that awareness emerges in parts of this music. Yet the work is also a beacon of hope that we would come through this war. And is there a more moving opening to a slow movement than that of the *Romanza*, with its hauntingly beautiful English horn solo?

Walton *Symphony No. 1*

I think of William Walton as the British Sibelius. Some of this 1935 piece seems hewn out of granite, and it's phenomenally orchestrated, with a glorious slow movement and plenty of Italian sunshine (Walton began writing it while living in Italy). Ever since Beethoven, composers felt that the final movement of a symphony must serve as the culmination of all that

precedes it – a challenge not all have met successfully. Often, the promise of the first three movements remains unresolved at the end. But there's nothing anti-climactic about this work. It's perfectly proportioned and viscerally exciting, for both the audience and the orchestra.  Interview by Hannah Nepilova

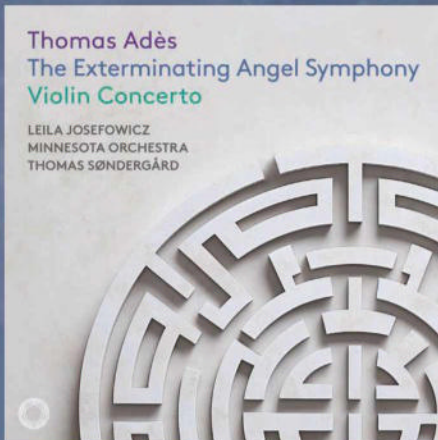


A green and pleasant land:
Donald Runnicles celebrates
British orchestral music;
(opposite) composers Gustav
Holst and William Walton

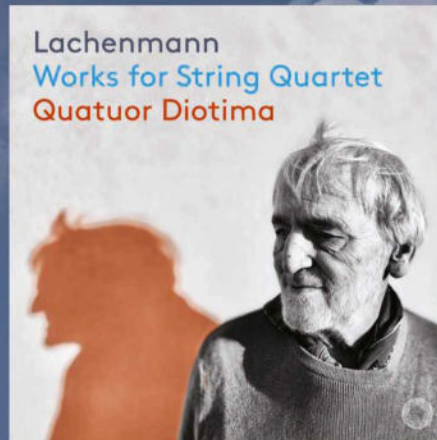


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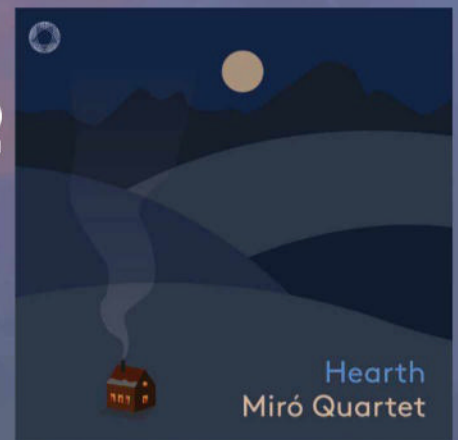
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Richard Morrison

There's much that Europe and UK festivals can learn from each other

There's a mischievous joke running through Harold Evans's scathing account of the British newspaper industry in the 1970s and '80s, *Good Times, Bad Times*. As editor of *The Times*, he constantly tries to make contact with the paper's arts editor. Each time he attempts to set up a meeting he's told that this elusive figure is 'reviewing music festivals' and in transit somewhere between Bayreuth and Verbier, or maybe Salzburg and Aix-en-Provence. In the end, Evans himself leaves the paper, still never having met his arts editor.

Ah, those were the days! Today's newspaper critics would count themselves lucky to be allowed to review even one foreign music festival a year. Over the decades, however, I have managed to get to a few of them. And what never ceases to amaze is how different they are – in atmosphere, audience and financing – from the UK's biggest arts festivals, such as the BBC Proms, Aldeburgh and Edinburgh.

Take Lucerne, where I spent a few days this August. In some ways, its five-week festival is unmatched. While I was there, four of the greatest European orchestras – from Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin and Vienna – followed each other in and out of Jean Nouvel's glorious KKL Concert Hall, as if competing in some sort of sonic beauty contest. If you want nothing except stellar orchestral music-making, there is no better place on the planet in which to get it. And the way that this hall perches next to majestic Lake Lucerne, with Alpine peaks on every horizon, only adds to the thrill of attending a concert there.

But, my goodness, you pay for it! Top-price tickets were a jaw-dropping £300.

To put that in context, for the same money you could have got into 37 Proms at the Royal Albert Hall. OK, Lucerne offers cheaper tickets as well. And this year the festival has erected something called Ark Nova: a giant, inflatable balloon structure in which you could attend 45-minute chamber concerts for a mere £14.

However, it's those ultra-glamorous, prohibitively expensive concerts in the KKL that set the tone of the festival, including the make-up of the audience, which is almost entirely middle-aged or

Britain's great festivals have found ingenious ways of concealing how small their budgets are

older, dresses formally (overwhelmingly men in suits and ties) and expects pristine performances of mainstream Austro-German repertoire to match. The same is true of Lucerne's great rival: the Salzburg Festival.

It's a formula that clearly works for them. But this year's Lucerne Festival will be Michael Haefliger's last as director after more than a quarter of a century at the helm. He has widened the audience a little with innovations such as an outdoor screening of the opening concert. But is this the moment, I wonder, to try a few British-style experiments?

Lucerne's football club, for instance, plays in a stadium with a 16,000 capacity. Why doesn't the festival put on a Proms-style concert there, with a

standing audience listening to, say, the Berlin Philharmonic, and tickets priced at £8 (the same as at the BBC Proms)? Or it could take a leaf out of Edinburgh's book and encourage a fringe festival to complement the main events? No controlling impresario, no overarching theme or quality control; just a free-for-all jamboree where student groups and others could just turn up and perform. I know the results might be messy and unpredictable, and therefore not very Swiss. But they could engage a different, younger audience.

There are things, however, that British festivals can learn from Lucerne and Salzburg. One is that goodwill and historic prestige will only take you so far if you regularly want to attract the world's top conductors, soloists and orchestras to the UK. Money also matters. If British audiences aren't prepared to pay £300 a ticket, and if our public subsidy of classical music is static or even in decline (as it is), some other way of filling the funding gap has to be found.

So far, those running Britain's great festivals have found ingenious ways of concealing how small their budgets actually are, in international terms. In the near future, however, we may find that UK concerts by the likes of the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics become rarer and rarer, simply because we can't match the fees offered by places like Lucerne. Which is a city, let's not forget, that has about the same number of people living in it as Northampton – but a determination to bring the best of the best into its concert hall every summer. 🎵

Richard Morrison is chief music critic and a columnist of The Times

Dark fascination

Cellist and composer Hildur Guðnadóttir has forged a career spanning classical, film and electronics – but she's always been drawn to unsettling themes, as she tells **Claire Jackson**

PHOTOGRAPHY: CAMILLE BLAKE/DG

Hildur Guðnadóttir is scrolling through her phone. Whereas most people use the device to collect photographs and notes alongside contact numbers, the Icelandic composer records snippets of music. These are not found sounds like bird song or a grumbling engine, but the melodies and rhythms that fill her mind on a near-constant basis. Such industry is not to be wasted, and so Guðnadóttir preserves each moment as a voice memo. 'These snapshots are a musical diary,' she says, demonstrating how she sings into the microphone. 'My music is deeply connected to my voice; there's a feedback loop between vocals and cello.'

There is a sense of exorcism to this process. Once the idea has been preserved, Guðnadóttir can continue with her day – or night. Creative seeds rarely arrive at convenient times. Many of these voice notes were recorded on pavements as Guðnadóttir paused on her bike, singing into her phone among the Berlin traffic. 'Music wakes me up sometimes,' she says. 'I record it to get it to leave me alone.'

Some of the kernels have gone on to be featured in high-profile film and TV scores (more about them later), but many remained gathering proverbial dust. Now,

the musings form the backbone for *Where to From*, Guðnadóttir's first solo album in 10 years. The cover depicts a child, eyes lowered behind an icy-white fringe. There's a luminous quality to her chalky skin. A passing glance suggests this could be an old photo of Guðnadóttir. But closer inspection reveals an unsettling stillness – these, and the images elsewhere in the

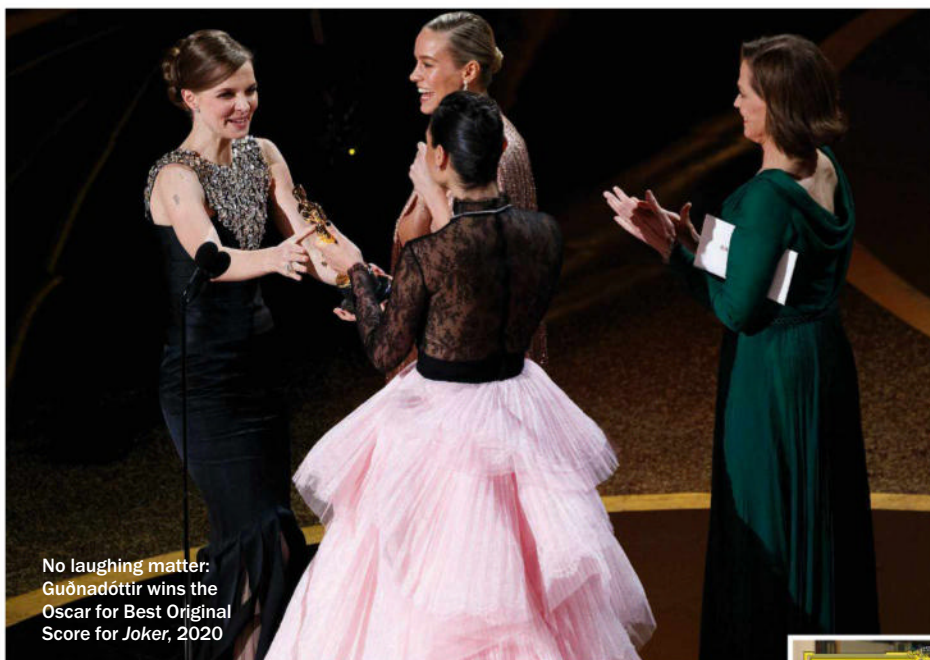
'Music wakes me up sometimes... I record it to get it to leave me alone'

booklet, are doll sculptures made by Gisèle Vienne, a friend of the composer.

'I've been thinking a lot about the history of record covers and the way composers have been presented over time,' says Guðnadóttir. 'I wanted to use the dolls, not only because I find Gisèle's sculptures fascinating, but to play with the idea of what a composer looks like.' The use of a doll as a trapped being is a leitmotif in art, where the uncanny or botched realism stirs concern and distrust. Placing this into the composer-context is subversive, ▶

In the shadows:
composer-cellist
Hildur Guðnadóttir
likes to explore
melancholy themes





No laughing matter: Guðnadóttir wins the Oscar for Best Original Score for *Joker*, 2020

Female inspiration: 'I don't really like being in the spotlight, but I need to be more visible'

effective – and a little creepy. 'Both mine and Gisèle's work is often described as dark,' agrees Guðnadóttir. 'People expect me to be a melancholic person.'

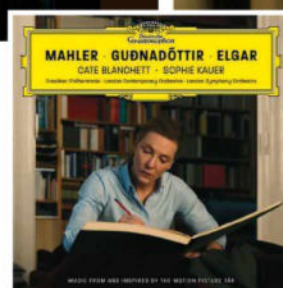
In fact, the creator of dark psychological thriller soundtracks – including *Joker*, *Chernobyl* and *Tár* – is warm and upbeat. 'I think it confuses people,' Guðnadóttir smiles. 'I'm far more interested in gothic horror than rom coms. I grew up reading Agatha Christie and Sherlock Holmes and crime novels; there is something very interesting to me about the darker side of life.' Musically, that interest is explored in works like Górecki's 'Symphony of Sorrowful Songs', which is on the piano in Guðnadóttir's Berlin studio. 'I'm playing his string quartets too,' she says, showing me the score. 'They are some of my favourite pieces.' Next to the piano in this small room is another music stand, this one at cello height, holding Bach's Suites.

We can imagine that these are the same pieces played by Olga Metkina (performed onscreen by Sophie Kauer), the fictional cellist in the Berlin orchestra conducted by Lydia Tár in the 2022 eponymous film. When Olga arrives at Tár's apartment for a rehearsal, she plays a piece on the conductor's piano desk. The bleak, beautiful melody is by Guðnadóttir, sung by the composer on the opening soundtrack album and played by Kauer in the version for cello. *Tár* posed an unusual challenge for Guðnadóttir: the film composer had to find a way to meld her own character-driven music with

extant works – including Mahler's Fifth, the work Tár is preparing to record.

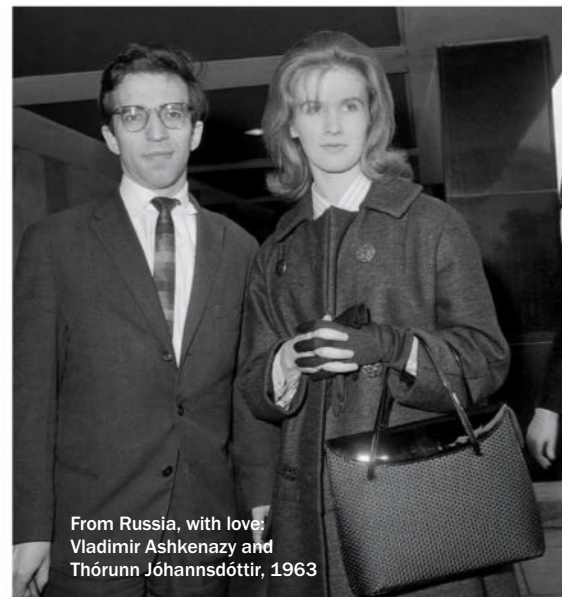
'There's the character Tár presents on the podium – the grand classical maestro – and the music that moves her, which is more contemporary and simple. I wanted to capture that duality,' explains Guðnadóttir. 'For her own compositions I wanted to write something that was the polar opposite to Mahler,' she says of the sparse, introspective pieces she created for Cate Blanchett to claim. The membrane between the screen composer and the composer for screen becomes increasingly porous; *Tár* is deliciously meta. The imagined Mahler Fifth is to be recorded for Deutsche Grammophon, the label for whom Guðnadóttir records (as well as *Where to From*, her solo albums *Mount A* (2006), *Without Sinking* (2009), *Leyfðu Ljósinu* (2012) and *Saman* (2014) are available via DG). The *Tár* album combines the Dresden Philharmonic's performances of Mahler, Elgar and Guðnadóttir.

Composing for film can require incorporating some unusual elements. In *Tár*, the composer-conductor becomes fixated on a particular interval, which



director Todd Field heard made by an alarm device used by his father-in-law. Guðnadóttir takes this interval and sews it into the score. 'One of the first things we did was define

the main characters in terms of their BPM [beats per minute] and their interior musical landscape,' says Guðnadóttir. Using these types of immersive samples has become important in her work. For the 2019 HBO series *Chernobyl*, Guðnadóttir uses a recording of a nuclear power plant. But often the clean acoustic melodies can be the most impactful; elegiac cello writing illuminates the ominous depression of the clown in 2019's *Joker*. Such work is



From Russia, with love:
Vladimir Ashkenazy and
Thórunn Jóhannsdóttir, 1963

The music of Iceland

From choral music to concert halls

Along with the rush of cascading waterfalls and erupting geysers, Iceland's most identifiable soundscape is choral. The heroic songs of early modern Europe found life as *Edda*, an Icelandic version of the German *Nibelungenlied* beloved by Wagner. The later *rímur* – a spoken-sung epic poem – saw musicians travelling across the country as *Rímur Tellers*, a tradition that has been recently revived.

It wasn't until 1950 that Iceland had its own official state symphony orchestra, which was based for many years in Reykjavík's largest cinema. In the following decade, pianist Thórunn Jóhannsdóttir met Vladimir Ashkenazy while she was studying at the Moscow Conservatory. To marry Ashkenazy, Jóhannsdóttir had to give up her Icelandic citizenship, but after several years in the USSR the couple returned to Iceland, with Ashkenazy becoming naturalised. In 1970 he founded the Reykjavík Arts Festival (of which he remains honorary president) and advised on the creation of Harpa, Reykjavík's main concert hall and conference centre.

Harpa, now home to the Iceland Symphony Orchestra (ISO) and the Icelandic Opera, was built on shaky foundations. When a press contingent was dispatched to celebrate breaking ground in 2008, the project had already been stop-start due to the then on-going financial crisis. Harpa opened in 2011 with the ISO performing with Ashkenazy and pianist Víkingur Ólafsson who, along with composers Anna Þorvaldsdóttir, Ólafur Arnalds, Hildur Guðnadóttir and others are bringing Iceland's musicality to the international stage.

'I'm far more interested in the darker side of life. I think it confuses people'

critically acclaimed, and Guðnadóttir has won an Oscar, a Bafta, a Golden Globe and two Grammys for her work in television and film, notably becoming the first solo female composer to win a Golden Globe for Best Original Score.

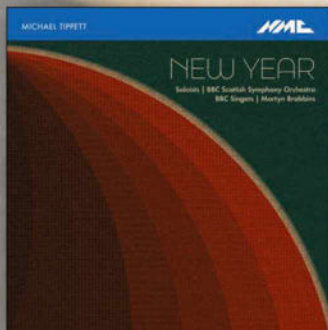
'It wasn't until I started seeing these statistics – the tiny percentage of female film composers – that I began to understand that the opportunities I have had have been unusual,' says Guðnadóttir. 'I'm not someone who likes to be in the spotlight but I've come to realise that I

need to be more visible so that girls can see examples of women writing this type of music. I've had it said to me a few too many times, "Are you sure you can handle this?" The implication is that I might not be able to because I am a woman.'

Such limitation had never occurred to Guðnadóttir. Born in Reykjavík, Iceland, in 1982, she was surrounded by music – her father Guðni Franzson is a clarinettist and composer, and her mother Ingveldur Guðrún Ólafsdóttir is an opera singer. She also grew up in a society that



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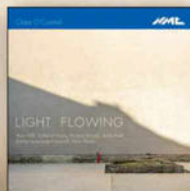
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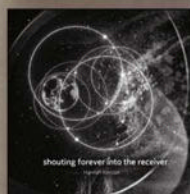
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Winning smile:
(left) Guðnadóttir with her
Grammy for *Chernobyl*,
2020; (main) the composer
enjoys the duality of
operating in classical
and popular spheres



celebrated female leadership: during her childhood, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir was Iceland's president – the first woman to hold the position and the first in the world to be a democratically elected president of a country – and Björk was reanimating the avant-garde. 'I grew up seeing women as strong professionals,' says Guðnadóttir, whose grandmother was one of the first female doctors in Iceland. 'I was always told that if there's something that you feel that you want to do, you just do it.'

That thing was the cello, which Guðnadóttir began playing at five, going on to the Reykjavík Music Academy and Iceland Academy of the Arts before moving to Berlin. 'I spent my weekdays and Saturday mornings playing with string orchestras and practising scales. And then in the evenings and on the weekends, I'd be playing with my friends in bands and experimenting with electronics,' laughs Guðnadóttir. 'For me, those two sides have always gone completely hand in hand.'

Like Tár, Guðnadóttir didn't always find the duality easy to reconcile. 'I'd arrive at string sectionals smelling of smoke,' she says, 'and then later, playing in the band, my friends would be disappointed that I had to leave because I needed to be up early to get to orchestra practice. But I've always loved building bridges between those worlds, and Iceland was the place where everything was possible.' In the naughties, the Icelandic post-rock soundworld led the charge, with Sigur Rós shifting the genre from alternative to mainstream.

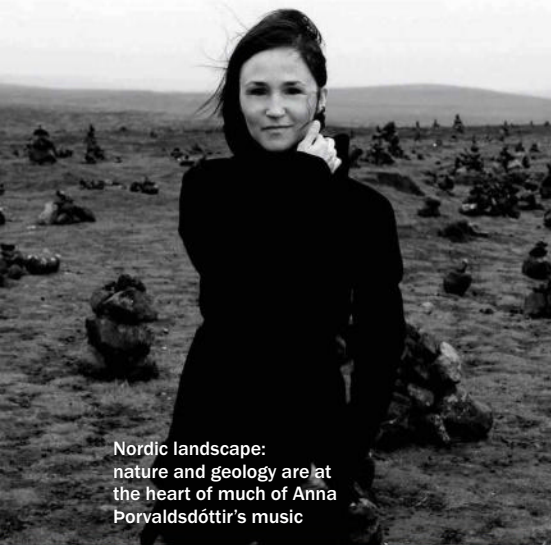
'I was always told if there's something you feel you want to do, you just do it'

Guðnadóttir was at the centre of this community, making music with Múm and Jóhann Jóhannsson, with whom she would share a studio in Germany, continuing to collaborate until his death in 2018.

There was a sense of pragmatism to this collective working. 'Life in Iceland was very isolated,' says Guðnadóttir. 'There wasn't any internet at that point; we didn't fly anywhere as it was so expensive. Between us we had a handful of amplifiers and good microphones. It was a beautiful way to grow up – making music with friends to survive the darkness.'

The Sigur Rós-inspired post-rock world foregrounded unusual timbres, such as gibberish vocals (that many UK fans believed to be the Icelandic tongue until corrected) and the use of a bow on

electric guitar. It was within this sphere that Guðnadóttir began experimenting with cello techniques, and started playing the halldorophone, a type of electronic cello. 'It was built by Halldór Úlfarsson, a friend of mine,' she explains. 'He made this instrument because we were having jam sessions and he needed something to play. Initially it had the body of a guitar, but later a cello body, with a speaker on the back that creates a feedback mechanism, with pickups on every string. It's a Jimi Hendrix cello!' The instrument, once beloved of Icelandic parties, got worldwide attention when Guðnadóttir used it in the *Joker* score. 'It can make loud, droning noises but you can also play with the bow. I'm excited about expanding the vocabulary of the cello in every direction,' she says.



Nordic landscape: nature and geology are at the heart of much of Anna Þorvaldsdóttir's music

Northern voices

Five further Icelandic composers

Jón Leifs (1899-1968)

Leifs's early impetus as a composer came from Icelandic folksong. The country's landscape would then inspire dramatic choral and orchestral works such as *Hekla* and *Dettifoss*, depicting a volcano and waterfall respectively, though it was the tragic death of his daughter that gave rise to his best known work, 1947's *Requiem*.

Hafliði Hallgrímsson (born 1941)

A former principal cellist of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, Hallgrímsson's former teachers include Peter Maxwell Davies. Much of his work is for chamber-sized ensembles, including *Poemi*, his 1983 concerto for violin and strings.

Björk (Guðmundsdóttir) (born 1965)

Citing Stockhausen and Philip Glass among her key influences, Björk is Iceland's most successful ever songwriter, with sales of over 40 million records, and an important electronic music pioneer. Her 2017 book *34 Scores for Piano, Organ, Harpsichord and Celeste* features arrangements of her most popular songs.

Jóhann Jóhannsson (1969-2018)

Combining orchestral and electronic elements, the versatile Jóhannsson enjoyed particular renown as a film composer. His scores for *The Theory of Everything* (2014) and *Sicario* (2015) were both nominated for Academy Awards.

Anna Þorvaldsdóttir (born 1977)

Often inspired by Iceland's landscape, Þorvaldsdóttir is widely recognised as one of today's most distinctive and imaginative composers. Among her notable orchestral works are *Metacosmos*, premiered by the New York Philharmonic under Esa-Pekka Salonen in 2018, and *Archora*, commissioned for the BBC Proms in 2022.



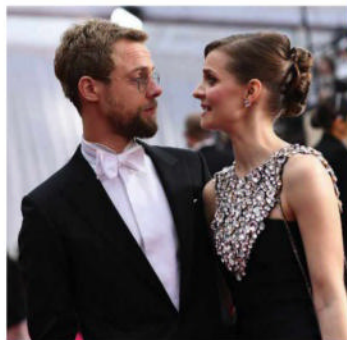
Only skin deep: exploring the composer's image; (below) with her husband Sam Slater, with whom she worked on *Battlefield 2042*

'My pieces and records are a musical documentation of special friendships'

It's the combination of these acoustic-electric colours and clean, choral brushstrokes – inspired by traditional Icelandic music – that make Guðnadóttir's style distinctive. Take *The Fact of the Matter*, premiered at the 2022 Proms by the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC Singers, which brings to mind windswept treeless landscapes and smoking geysers. Rumbling percussion, tolling bells and crystalline vocals evoke an emotional landscape that occasionally explodes. The BBC commission was set alongside Jóhannsson's reworkings of Durham miners' songs (*The Miners' Hymns*), Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* fantasy-overture and Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2, a fascinating juxtaposition of Icelandic and Russian sonorities.

Some who heard Guðnadóttir's premiere may have been unaware that the composer had another piece performed at the Royal Albert Hall that year. Selections from *Battlefield 2042* – created alongside Guðnadóttir's husband, the British composer-producer Sam Slater – were played by the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra as part of the first-ever Gaming Prom. OK, so other than playing *Super Mario Bros* in the 1990s and the belief that Pikachu is adorable, my knowledge of gaming is rather 8-bit. Guðnadóttir is not a gamer either, although she spent time at the console for this, her first video soundtrack. 'Ultimately, it's very similar to writing for screen,' she says, and of working with those close to her, 'friendship and music are the most vital parts of my

life. Getting to know each other through music is so special. My pieces and records are a musical documentation of friendship.' 🎧
'Where to From' is out on DG on 31 October. Guðnadóttir performs 'Where to From' at the Barbican, London, on 21 March 2026



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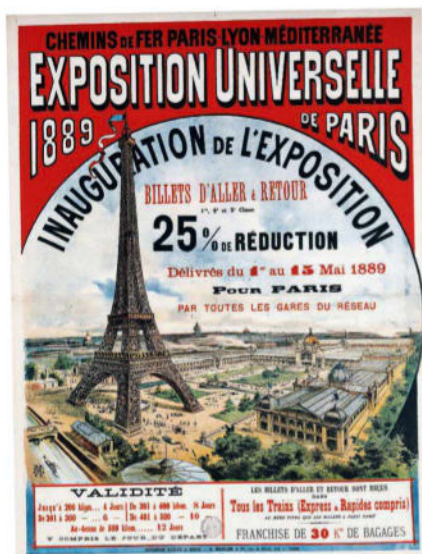
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A passage to Indonesia

Hearing the Javanese gamelan at the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris introduced Debussy to a new world, explains **Simon Broughton**



The *Exposition Universelle*, held in Paris in 1889 and attracting 30 million visitors during the six months it was open, has bequeathed us the Eiffel Tower in the Champ de Mars where the exhibition took place. Only intended to stand for 20 years, the tower remains the symbol of the city today. Yet there's another (till now) less tangible legacy of the world fair, which influenced one of the leading composers of the day.

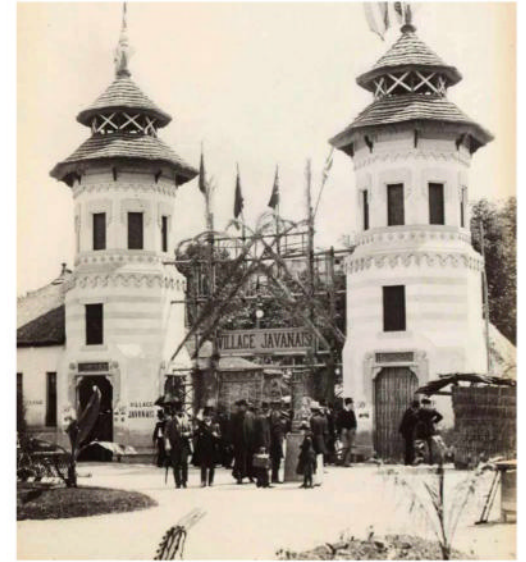
A regular visitor was Claude Debussy, who was attracted to the exposition's *Kampung*

Javanaise (Javanese Village) with its gamelan music and dancers. 'Rome is no longer in Rome; Cairo is no longer in Egypt, nor is the island of Java in the East Indies. All of this has come to the Champ de Mars,' wrote musicologist Julien Tiersot. 'The thing most interesting of all and most novel for us, in the Javanese Village, is a spectacle of sacred dances, accompanied by a music infinitely curious, which will take us as far as possible from our civilisation.'

The two pagoda-like towers which formed the entrance to the Javanese Village were situated next to a replica temple tower from Angkor Wat



Culture clash: (main pic) Javanese dancers and gamelan players at the Paris World's Fair; (opposite) a poster from the Exposition Universelle; (left) composer Claude Debussy; (below) the pagoda-like towers at the Javanese Village entrance; (below) *bonang* kettle gongs



in an area dedicated to southeast Asia. The 45 or so Javanese 'on show' prepared food, made batiks and jewellery, and played gamelan with dancers.

A gamelan is a collection of tuned gongs and metallophones, generally of bronze, played by a dozen or more musicians. The gongs punctuate the larger sections of the pieces, while the xylophone-like *gambang* and *bonang* kettle gongs play a central melody, with higher instruments like the *gender* playing faster variations over the top. There are drums in the ensemble too, and it produces a gloriously shimmering and captivating sound.

According to his friend Robert Godet, who had visited Java, Debussy went to hear the gamelan countless times. 'Many fruitful hours for Debussy were spent in the *Javanese Kampong*,' he writes, 'listening to the percussive rhythmic complexities of the gamelan with its inexhaustible combinations of ethereal, flashing timbres, while with the amazing *bedhayas* (dances) the music came visually alive.'

Debussy himself said: 'Javanese music obeys laws of counterpoint that make Palestrina seem like child's play. If one listens to it without being prejudiced by one's European ears, one will find a percussive charm that forces one to admit that our own music is not much more than a barbarous... noise more fit for a travelling circus.'

In truth, the *Kampong Javanaise* was itself something of a travelling circus, although not as morally objectionable as *Le Village Nègre*,



A gamelan is a collection of tuned gongs and metallophones, generally bronze, played by a dozen or more musicians

featuring 400 indigenous people from the French colonies in a human zoo. 'The people in the *Kampong* complained of being cold, of not being able to walk around the exhibition,' says Ángela López-Lara, who wrote her thesis on the gamelan at the 1889 exhibition. 'It was not as bad as for those from the French African colonies; they were free within the village. But they had long working hours with people staring at them all day. It was quite a shameful event.'

From the colonial perspective of the time, the Africans were seen as barbarous and primitive. 'The exhibitions aimed not only to offer a lesson in anthropology, but also to perpetuate hierarchies between colonisers and the colonised,' writes López-Lara. 'In the European mindset, however, Java represented something markedly different: a land with courts, princes and a sophisticated millenary culture.'

The gamelan was organised by German businessman Gustav Mundt, who had married into a Dutch family with tea and coffee plantations in Java. The purpose of the village was purely commercial – to sell tea and coffee. And it was batik workers from Sunda (West Java) who demonstrated their art during the day, served tea and coffee, and doubled up as gamelan musicians for the four female dancers.

Mundt's gamelan contained about 20 instruments, although only a small selection of these were used on stage. It seems space was limited, with the musicians crammed behind the dancing area. Or perhaps the bamboo platform wasn't sturdy enough to hold all the instruments.

Julien Tiersot also made extremely detailed transcriptions of some of the music. From



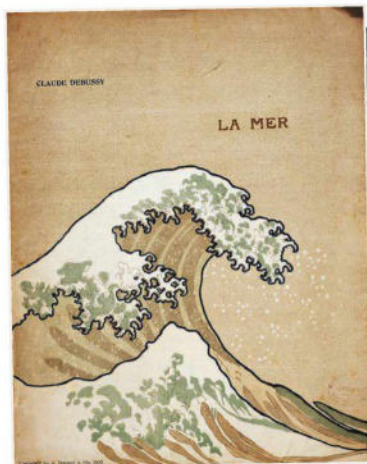
Alluring sound: a bamboo gamelan

Indonesian gamelan *A beginner's guide*

Sir Francis Drake visited Java in 1580 and described music 'of a very strange kind, pleasant and delightful'. The main Indonesian islands with gamelan music are Java and Bali. Both use large ensembles of gongs and metallophones – and there are also bamboo gamelans – but the styles of the two islands are very different.

In Muslim Java the music tends to be slow and stately, particularly for the gamelans linked to the royal courts of Surakarta (Solo) and Yogyakarta (Yogya). It's here that you can hear large ceremonial gamelans called gamelan Sekaten. They are played for a week to commemorate the birth and death of the Prophet Muhammad. Smaller gamelans are used for community events and shadow theatre performances. There's a style of Sundanese gamelan, known as gamelan Salendro with *kendang* barrel drums used for *wayang golek* (wooden puppet) performances, and this type of gamelan came to Paris.

In Hindu Bali, a much more dramatic style of gamelan, called *Kenyan*, took root in the early 20th century. It's full of dramatic changes in tempo and loud outbursts of music, frequently accompanying dance. Gamelan is very easy to hear in Bali, particularly in Ubud and around.



these, López-Lara explains, 'You can tell it's Sundanese and not Central Javanese music. The gamelan was tuned in *slendro* [the typical pentatonic gamelan scale], but the *rubab* [bowed instrument] played in *madenda* – more like our minor scale – and it's typical of Sundanese music to have these scales superimposed.'

This wasn't the first time gamelan had been heard in Europe. Gustav Mundt had brought a gamelan to a fair in Amsterdam in 1883 and he organised a much bigger one at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. But it was Paris 1889 that had the biggest musical impact, providing the opportunity not only for Debussy, but for Saint-Saëns and the teenage Ravel (also a

Gamelan helped to liberate Debussy's tonal and rhythmical thinking profoundly

frequent visitor) to hear gamelan for the first time. Indeed, gamelan influences are audible in 'Laideronnette, impératrice des pagodes' from Ravel's *Ma mère l'Oye* (1910) for piano duet and in the pentatonic melodies in the central section of his Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (1930).

It can be argued that the gamelan helped to liberate Debussy's tonal and rhythmical thinking even more profoundly. He was already using pentatonic scales, but one can hear the influence of gamelan in the *Prélude of Pour Le Piano* (1901); in the possibly gong-influenced low B that opens *La mer* (1903–5) with its subsequent *slendro*-like pentatonic melodies, as well as in its musical layers moving at slower and faster paces. *La mer*'s title page also featured Hokusai's *Great Wave*, showing the Orientalist tastes of the time.

But Debussy's most direct expression of the gamelan occurs in 'Pagodes' from *Estampes* (1903). The piano piece begins with a deep gong (again a low B and the open fifth above), followed



An exciting discovery: (above) the 1889 gamelan in Hamburg's MARKK Museum; (left) original title page of Debussy's *La mer* featuring Hokusai's *The Great Wave*

by overtone-rich harmonies and pentatonic melodies. It's not an imitation of a gamelan piece, but certainly an evocation of that world, its title perhaps referring to those two pagodas that led into the *Kampong Javanais* at the exposition.

The gamelan from the 1883 Amsterdam exhibition is now in storage at the Wereldmuseum in Leiden and the one from Chicago in 1893 is on show in the city's Field Museum. But what happened to the Paris gamelan that so fascinated Debussy?

López-Lara's thesis supervisor Luca Chiantore suggested she try and track it down. She found an 1889 article in Dutch about Mundt, which indicated he planned to donate it to his home city of Hamburg. 'We then discovered an online catalogue from the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg. In December 1889 there was a list of 50 or 60 objects donated by Mundt – musical instruments and *wayang golek* puppets.'

But were they still there? Hamburg was severely bombed in World War II, so the instruments may not have survived. The next day she contacted the museum, now called MARKK: Museum am Rothenbaum. A couple of months later (Jan 2024) she was in a storage depot with curator Jeanette Kokott.

The museum knew nothing about the gamelan or its history. From the documentation López-Lara strongly suspected this must be the Paris gamelan, but she needed to see it to be sure. There were good illustrations of the instruments from the Paris exposition, particularly the *bonang* kettle gongs on a frame with distinctly curving legs. 'That was the instrument I really needed to see. I was wearing a mask and gloves and suddenly I realised the *bonang* was right there at my feet. It was super exciting.'

Whether MARKK will do anything with the gamelan now they know of its provenance is a question for the future. But a nagging mystery has been solved. 🗨



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Identity crisis

Do national schools of piano playing still exist in 2025, asks **Jessica Duchen** – and indeed, has the concept ever really been an accurate one?

Is there a special sorcery in Seoul? Cunning creativity in Canada? Preternatural pizzazz in Paris? Oh, why do so many great pianists come from this or that country? We even have some in Britain; is there something in the water in Southend-on-Sea?

The matter is much more interesting than that kind of baloney. Broadly speaking, national ‘schools’ of pianism can be traced back to Beethoven’s day or beyond. You might see the Viennese and German approaches as intellectual and self-effacing – music as holy art. In France, *jeu perlé* (pearly touch) and sleek objectivity appear to have been taught since the 18th century. The Hungarians can seem fiery and elegant, the Italians coolly magisterial and the British ever so terribly nice... Still, in an ever-more globalised environment, the notion that particular countries produce more great musicians than others seems, if not irrelevant, then increasingly questionable.

Today’s younger generation of pianists is probably the least nationalistic yet. Seong-Jin Cho, winner of the 2015 Chopin International Competition, has a typically hybrid heritage. He trained in his native South Korea with a teacher who had studied with Leon Fleisher, himself a pupil of Artur Schnabel; his later teachers included Michel Béroff in Paris and, in the US, Kevin Kenner, who had studied in Poland.

‘When I perform, I forget about my nationality,’ Cho says. ‘Off the stage, I’m very Korean, but on stage, I don’t think about it. I can’t define a Korean piano school, because so many great teachers studied abroad. Really, it depends on individual musicians.’

Even the ‘French school’, celebrated for its dexterity and clarity, is hybrid when you lift the lid. Cho, who has recently recorded the complete Ravel piano music for DG, cites a wide variety of approaches among French pianists, from Samson François and Alfred Cortot in the past, to Lucas Debargue, Cho’s contemporary at the Paris Conservatoire. ‘He is more of a free spirit. So I don’t know what the “real French” would be. I found in Paris that French musicians are more academic than we think. You analyse music, which I hadn’t studied in Korea. It’s so interesting – not only classical repertoire, but also contemporary music like Stockhausen.’

Arguably, the greatest mystique has always surrounded the Russian school, influenced by Anton Rubinstein, the legendary pianist and composer who founded the St Petersburg Conservatory. I talk to Rustem Hayroudinoff, a professor at the Royal Academy of Music who has made acclaimed recordings of Rachmaninov and most recently Bach and his sons for

A song in his heart: Anton Rubinstein was influenced by the *bel canto* tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini (below); the St Petersburg Conservatory, where many Russian school players studied







Man of the world *Pianist Seong-Jin Cho*

Seong-Jin Cho (above) won third prize in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow when he was only 17 and subsequently headed abroad for further studies. 'For me the most important thing was to experience European culture, so I decided to move to Paris,' he says. He was inspired by leafing through a brochure for the Salle Pleyel: 'All my favourite pianists – Radu Lupu, Martha Argerich, Krystian Zimerman, Grigory Sokolov – were coming to Paris every year.

'I met Michel Béroff at the Tchaikovsky Competition, where he was a jury member. I have always admired him; his Prokofiev concerto recording with the Gewandhaus Orchestra and Kurt Masur is one of the greatest. With my Korean teacher I had learned Classical and Romantic repertoire, but I'm interested in 20th-century music like Prokofiev, Bartók and Ravel, so Béroff was the perfect musician to study with. I first played for Kevin Kenner when I was 20, before preparing for the Chopin Competition. [Violinist] Kyung-Wha Chung introduced me to him. I really admire his approach, especially in Chopin.

'Ultimately, I agree that music is a universal language. We can communicate easily through music, no matter where we are from. It depends on the individual musician.'

A grand tradition: (clockwise from right) Horowitz, as with many Russians, loved singers; Jean-Efflam Bavouzet feels French when playing Ravel; as a frequent competition jury member, Imogen Cooper sees general trends in playing

Onyx. He moved to London 30 years ago after studying at the Moscow Conservatory with Lev Naumov, a student of Heinrich Neuhaus (who also taught Sviatoslav Richter and Emil Gilels).

The key, Hayroutinoff says, is sound quality. 'You learn to make a huge sound with the least effort. That sound is never harsh, because it's created with the weight of the body, not the strength of the muscles,' he says. 'We learned to use the free weight of the arm. Much attention is dedicated to the beauty of the sound, and before Soviet times probably it was even more so, because there was an incredible role model in Anton Rubinstein. Sergei Rachmaninov had the most incredible sound, but he said that if anyone thinks that he is a great pianist, it's only because they'd never heard Anton Rubinstein.

'All of these pianists were influenced by great singers. Anton Rubinstein loved Giovanni Battista Rubini [the *bel canto* tenor] and would try to imitate his mannerisms, tone and phrasing on the piano. For Rachmaninov, it was Feodor Chaliapin, and when Vladimir Horowitz retired from the concert platform for 12 years, almost every day he would listen to opera, which he loved much more than piano music.' Some of the Russian school's 'golden age' pianists would phrase like Chaliapin, he says, starting strongly and tailing off as if the breath is being gradually used, which can create a magical effect.

Still, the Russian school has little to do with being Russian. 'Look at Ignaz Friedman, who was Polish and studied with Anton Rubinstein; and Neuhaus, who was of German descent,' Hayroutinoff says. Besides, Neuhaus studied with Leopold Godowsky, a towering virtuoso from Vilnius who was largely self-taught. Globalisation is nothing new for the piano.

Jean-Efflam Bavouzet agrees. He is a French pianist whose eclectic tastes carry him from Haydn to Bartók to Boulez. His recordings include the complete Haydn piano sonatas and a series of Mozart concertos for Chandos with the Manchester Camerata conducted by Gábor Takács-Nagy. He, too, has a complete Ravel recording out this year, but French music has not always been his priority. 'There are few instances where, as a musician, I feel French,' he says.

'It is only with Ravel – and with Brahms. With Ravel, his sense of proportion involves passion, but very contained, and with an elegant and charming surface. I respond to this as French. With Brahms, it's the opposite: there is an aspect of Brahms's music that I still do not really understand.' So, the French genuinely don't like Brahms? 'Ah, but the younger generation of great



French pianists – David Kadouch, Alexandre Kantorow – they adore Brahms and are very close to this music. This is super-strange to me!

The melting-pot of traditions in younger players is clear to Imogen Cooper. A frequent jury member at international piano competitions, chair of the Leeds International Piano Competition jury in 2024, she is well placed to assess the state of the art. She herself embodies a mix of traditions: she left her native London aged 12 to study in Paris and later became a disciple of Alfred Brendel.

'I've seen various nationalities while sitting through competitions,' she says, 'and some schools are particularly strong at the moment – the Japanese school in particular is absolutely wonderful. Still, I think the world has opened up enormously since communism receded and the Berlin Wall came down. Everybody is training everywhere, so nobody really belongs anywhere.

'I do see general trends. For instance, there are some wonderfully impressive things, like the amount of hard work and the nerves of steel which allow these young pianists to perform at any hour of the day and night, live-streamed, live on local radio, and to play without wrong notes or memory lapses. Most of my generation would say that we simply could never have done that.

'Still, they all move around so much together, from competition to competition, that packs form that have nothing to do with nationality. I do think that schools are breaking down more – and I don't think that's a bad thing.'

One crucial factor, though, probably is genuinely a matter of national culture and also government policies: musical education in the early years, which lays the foundations. 'Learning an instrument was very normal in



Korea,' Cho says. 'I went to a kindergarten "piano academy" and after six months my teacher told my mum that I was a little bit talented.'

'South Korea was really poor after the Second World War, so for our grandparents' generation, the mindset was education, education, education. My parents' generation also placed much emphasis on education, not only about music, but in general. For music, you have to start quite early. I started playing the piano aged six, but many of my friends began at three or four.'

'I went to Seoul Art High School, where all the musicians, painters and dancers study. We learned everything – science, maths, history – plus music, with solfège and piano lessons. Every six months we had a piano exam. There were 50 pianists in our grade, and it was tough: we were ranked from No. 1 to No. 50. I was always first or second, but some of my friends would be around 38. They were so disappointed and felt they had to practise harder. Perhaps the environment is a bit too competitive – but we were motivated.'

Rigorous early training also provides ex-Soviet Bloc musicians with an advantage. 'We were given technical processes,' Hayroutdinoff says, 'which you would learn no matter your level of talent, such as arpeggios from the same note in 11 different positions. You had to pass tests in them to progress to the next year.'

He often finds that students from other traditions (or lack of them) can't manage such



“Pianists move around so much together, from competition to competition, that packs form that have nothing to do with nationality”

things. 'Sometimes people say, "Ah, the Russians, they're all about technique, but where's the poetry?" It's complete rubbish! If you can't play scales, you can't be a poet – just as if you can't read, you can't be a writer. You need the tools.'

Bavouzet points out, too, that cultural identity has nothing to do with instrumental technique, but rather concerns language, education, literature and history. Even amid today's internationalism, a national sensibility survives.

'There is a fine line to be drawn: keeping your identity without rejecting the outside world,' he says. 'That's what I hope for, because today the words national, nationalist and nationality can be taken wrongly. I think there is something beautiful about belonging to a community, but that doesn't mean, unfortunately, that that's how history is made. If you belong to a community, then another community can sometimes be seen as your enemy, and it should not be. Let's be proud of what we are and accept the others.'

As he says, it's a fine balance. Globalisation in music, as everywhere, will probably increase. But perhaps we can keep alive the most valuable lessons of the old approaches to the piano as time goes by. The world changes; inevitably musicians change too. One thing is certain: it's not because of anything in the water. ☺

Seong-Jin Cho premieres Donghoon Shin's Piano Concerto at Barbican London on 20 November as part of his 2025-26 LSO Artist Portrait series.

City of music

This summer young musicians from around the world gathered in Harbin, China for a world-class display of talent

Supporting talent, building bridges

In July, rising stars of violin, cello and chamber music gathered in the city of Harbin in Heilongjiang Province, China. The 10-day Schoenfeld International String Competition celebrated its sixth event in 2025 with over 100 young musicians from 22 countries to compete in violin, cello and chamber music categories. Founded in 2013, the competition not only supports future luminaries in classical music but also aims to build a bridge between Eastern and Western cultures, uniting historical traditions and local perspectives.

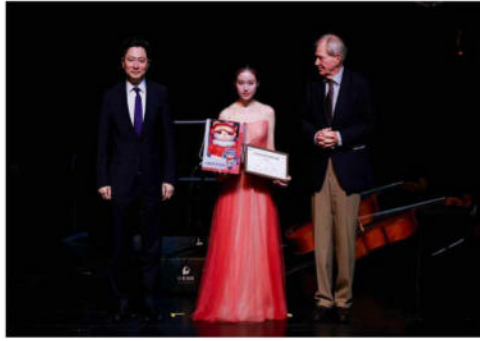
'We aim to turn the competition into a high-quality platform for dialogue between Eastern and Western musical civilisations,' says Suli Xue, president and

artistic director of the Schoenfeld International String Competition. This reflects the hope of founder Alice Schoenfeld, who established the competition in 2013, with the belief that it should 'serve not only to find the best of the best, but, more importantly, to bring people together.'

A lifetime devoted to music

The Schoenfeld International String Competition is the culmination of a lifetime of devotion to the arts by the Slovenian-born Schoenfeld sisters, Eleonore and Alice. Both celebrated string musicians, the sisters settled in America enjoying successful careers in cello (Eleonore) and violin (Alice). They were also deeply committed to education, training artists such as American





Concerto. Second place went to 24-year-old Bo Cui also from China, while 22-year-old American violinist Audrey Park came in third. Bo Cui also won the Best Performance of a Chinese New Work prize.

In the cello category, 15-year-old Korean cellist Jeri Lee took first prize, winning \$30,000 for her performance of Tchaikovsky's *Variations on a Rococo Theme*. Matthias Balzat, 26, from New Zealand came in second, and 19-year-old Russian Bogdan Efremov placed third. Runing Li won the Best Performance of a Chinese New Work prize. 'What stayed with me most about the Schoenfeld Competition is how deeply it trusted its participants,' said cellist Jeri Lee. 'Winning first prize was a great honour, but what has stayed with me even more is the feeling that my music truly reached someone – both the jury and the audience. This experience reaffirms my belief that I am on the right path as an artist.'

In the chamber music category, Trio Archai from Basel won first prize, as well as the award for the Best Performance of Beethoven's Work. The Berlinsky Quartet from Russia came second and the MILA Quartet from Tianjin Juilliard School in China was awarded third place.

The event came to a close at the award ceremony, where Finnish cellist Arto Noras congratulated all of the young musicians: 'You are all winners,' he said. 'I hope that you continue your playing with the same musical dedication and flame you have shown for us during this competition.'

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violinist Anne Akiko Meyers and Suli Xue – a chamber musician and the current director of the Schoenfeld International String Competition.

After Eleonore's death in 2013, Alice founded the competition, with the first event taking place in Hong Kong. In 2014 it moved to its current home of Harbin, building a solid reputation in the classical competition arena. In 2017 it was accepted into the World Federation of International Music Competitions. Alice died in 2019, aged 98, leaving the legacy of a competition that enriches the world of classical music.

This year, the Schoenfeld International String Competition welcomed the largest number of global entrants yet, with young artists competing for prestigious awards in cello, violin and chamber music. The programme also included performances of newly

commissioned Chinese works, recitals, masterclasses and a community outreach initiative. The event was sponsored by the Harbin Modern Culture & Tourism Investment Group Co Ltd.

The best of the best

The panel of judges this year included revered French violinist and conductor Augustin Dumay, highly acclaimed Chinese violinist Tianwa Yang and American violinist Jennifer Koh. With such a high number of entrants from around the world, the young musicians faced fierce competition. Rising to the top in the violin category was 22-year-old Meng Zou, China, who won the \$30,000 first prize for his performance of the Sibelius Violin



To learn more about the Schoenfeld International String Competition visit schoenfeldcompetition.com

Cultural exchange:
(main and below)
Abdullah conducts *Porgy and Bess* at The Beijing Music Festival, 2024;
(right) Cape Town Opera is awarded BMF 2024 Artist of the Year

An American in China

Conductor Kazem Abdullah has built his career on introducing American works to international audiences. **Tom Stewart** meets him in Beijing

Just two decades after the premiere of George Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, the Soviet Union paid a New York opera company to stage performances there. The year was 1956 and the Cold War was well underway. Truman Capote, who joined the performers on their journey to Leningrad, heard one person leaving the theatre singing the line, 'There's a boat that's leavin' soon for New York, come with me, that's where we belong, sister'. Soviet critics, on the other hand, enjoyed the show but found their worst fears about capitalism and the West confirmed by Gershwin's tale of poverty and oppression. But the opera soon became a staple of Soviet repertoire, with singers brought in from the US and Europe to meet Gershwin's stipulation that its performers must be black.

Last autumn, almost 70 years later, *Porgy and Bess* was performed in China for the first time. American conductor Kazem Abdullah, 46, was at the podium, first in Shanghai and then in Beijing, where the opera was the crowning glory of last year's Beijing Music Festival. Although threats of trade tariffs were still months away, relations between the US and China were already soured. While the festival featured a number of American performers, it was notable but not surprising that, unlike the Soviets, they had not chosen an American opera company for these historic performances. Instead, it fell to the singers of Cape Town Opera, alongside the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, to introduce Chinese audiences to the inhabitants of Catfish Row, Gershwin's imagined South Carolina slum.

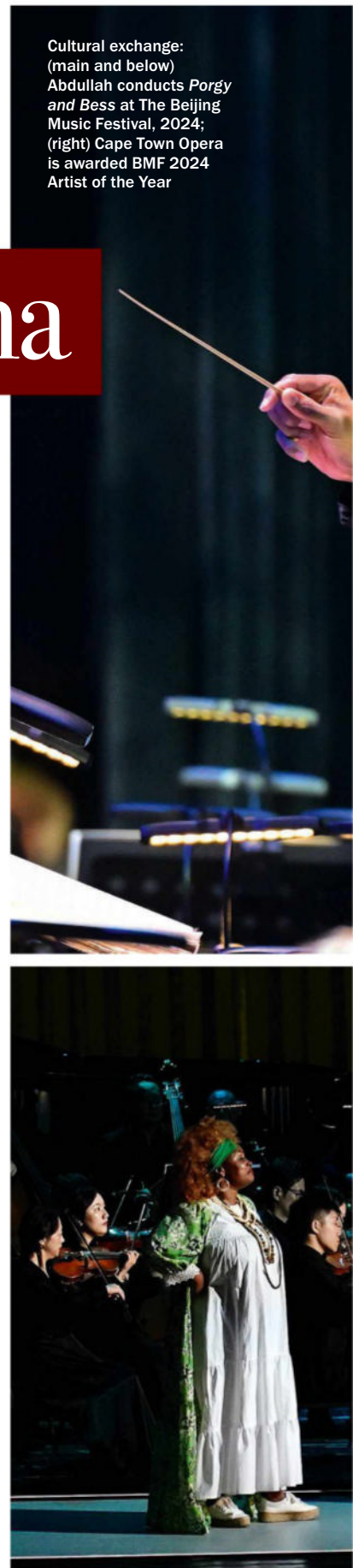
'It feels crazy, it's so exciting,' says Abdullah, speaking the day before the Beijing premiere.

'I feel like a pioneer, if that isn't too corny.' For a conductor who has built his career championing American opera on international stages, these performances of Gershwin's opera represented both personal achievement and cultural diplomacy in action. 'It isn't just *Porgy and Bess*; so many pieces we're very familiar with are still new here. There's still so much for people from the US and China to learn about each other's music and culture.' The semi-staged production

'There's so much for the US and China to learn about each other's music and culture'

had an all-South African cast of singers featuring Otto Maida as Porgy and Nonhlanhla Yende as Bess and was directed by Noa Naamat.

Abdullah's journey to conducting one of opera's most politically charged works in one of the world's most complex geopolitical relationships began in the American Midwest. Born in Indianapolis and raised in Dayton, Ohio by parents from Sierra Leone, he trained as a clarinetist at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music and with the New World Symphony before studying conducting at the Peabody Conservatory. He has been principal conductor of a number of German orchestras and in 2023 conducted *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* by Anthony Davis in a critically acclaimed production at New York's Metropolitan Opera.





The pivotal moment in Abdullah's transition to conducting came when maestro Michael Tilson Thomas warned him that waiting wouldn't make it any easier. 'He had seen me conduct and thought I was good, so asked why I wasn't pursuing it properly. I was in my early twenties and still trying to make my way as a clarinetist. He said it would get harder to make the move as I got older.' That was the final push Abdullah needed. 'Every conductor has his or her own path, but the transition is never seamless. So, I left the New World Symphony for Peabody, from which I got a position working in the Young Artist Program at LA Opera.'

Abdullah has since established himself as a champion of distinctly American operatic works. In 2013, during his time at the Sinfonieorchester Aachen, he conducted the first performance in Germany of Charles Wuorinen's *Brokeback Mountain*, based on Annie Proulx's story of two cowboys who fall in love in 1960s Wyoming. Ten years later, Abdullah's appearance at the Metropolitan Opera marked only the second time an opera by a black composer had been performed on its main stage. In its review, the *New York Times* called *X* a new 'American classic'. 'You might say the same about something like John Adams's *Nixon in China*,' Abdullah says. 'These works – like *Porgy* – turn American stories into operas using music that comes straight out of American traditions.' Where Gershwin uses spirituals and New Orleans jazz, *X* brings the references into the second half of the 20th century with passages of improvisation and performance directions that include 'Bitches Brew Miles', in reference to the 1970 album by Miles Davis. Both examples, Abdullah explains, make opera relevant to contemporary American audiences while telling stories that transcend cultural boundaries.

'In the same way an audience in New York or London can have its eyes opened by opera to stories about different kinds of people, a





Bold talent: composer Huang Ruo

Beijing Music Festival Highlights from 2025

Founded in 1998 by Chinese conductor Long Yu, the Beijing Music Festival has become the most prestigious classical music festival in the region. Following last year's Gershwin premiere, the festival returns from 10-24 October with the first performances in China of Berg's *Wozzeck* – Charles Dutoit will conduct the Shanghai Symphony and Opera Ballet Vlaanderen in a production that celebrates the opera's 100th anniversary. The English Concert will also perform Handel's *Rinaldo* with a British cast and Chinese countertenor Liu Shen at the Forbidden City Concert Hall.

This season also includes world premieres by three Chinese composers: Huang Ruo, Elliot Leung and Pulitzer Prize winner Du Yun, whose work features ethnic Jino musicians. Huang's piece is performed by the BBC Philharmonic with conductor John Storgårds, alongside Shostakovich's Ninth Symphony. The China Philharmonic, with conductor Yang Yang, violinist Gil Shaham and mezzo Ildikó Komlósi, will play Brahms, alongside Leung's work.

Other highlights include Russian pianist Mikhail Pletnev, and the Chinese Philharmonic in Shostakovich and Tchaikovsky with Long Yu and Chinese pianist Haochen Zhang.

Full info: bmf.org.cn/en



Changing minds and hearts:
Will Liverman in *X: The Life
and Times of Malcolm X* at
the New York Met, 2023;
(left) Abdullah conducts

Chinese audience can discover a whole different world through *Porgy and Bess*,' Abdullah argues. The Shanghai premiere, which took place in a hall with a 360-degree stage, proved his theory in practice, he explains. 'The fact I could actually see the audience's faces light up meant I could watch how engaged they were. People were intently following the subtitles and making sense of it all. But there are certain numbers, the ones that are most like folk songs, that anyone can relate to whatever background they come from.'

'As I conducted, I could see the audience's faces light up and watch how engaged they were'

For audiences in the US, Abdullah argues that being able to watch operas performed in English is key to ensuring the art form remains relevant and accessible to new audiences. 'It's a very important way in for many people because the language can be such a barrier,' he says, pointing to LA and Chicago Lyric Opera, as well as London's English National Opera, as examples of companies that have staged English-language versions of operas originally written in other languages. 'That said, when I conducted a production of Janáček's *Jenůfa* in Chicago, I met a few people who were new to opera. I wouldn't have expected them to get along with an opera in Czech but people just love the voices. I think the same is true for Chinese audiences watching *Porgy and Bess*.

'It's the job of the conductor to bring your understanding of music history and theory to the orchestra in a way that doesn't seem

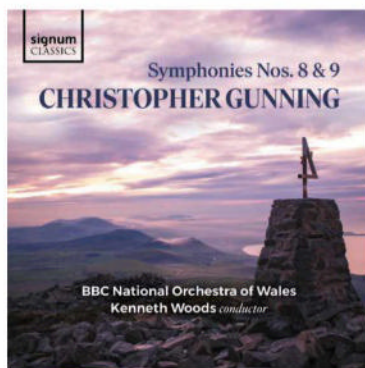
obviously didactic,' Abdullah says. 'If you say the right thing at the right time, it can unlock totally new ideas for the players. The opposite is also true, however. Say the wrong thing at the wrong moment and it can make things a whole lot worse.' In a relationship that relies so heavily on subtleties of meaning, how does he approach working with musicians, like those of the Shanghai orchestra, whose English is limited? 'It's about body language, baton technique and thinking very carefully about what to say,' he explains. 'In this case the orchestra had to learn a whole opera in less than a week. You have to be very precise and controlled.'

Porgy and Bess is Abdullah's third collaboration with Cape Town Opera, following performances with them of Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* and Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*. 'There are so many magnificent voices in that country,' Abdullah says. 'I always enjoy being there and working with such fantastic musicians.' Unlike the two previous examples, this production was semi-staged, with no sets for the singers, who faced in the opposite direction from the conductor. 'You have to be much more in tune with what everyone on stage is doing,' he explains. 'It requires a lot more flexibility because I have to rely completely on my ears and the nuances of what each singer is doing.'

As Abdullah prepared to bring *Porgy and Bess* to the Chinese capital at last, the broader implications became clear. In an era when cultural exchange faces increasing political headwinds, opera perhaps has a unique diplomatic language that speaks through emotion rather than ideology. The Chinese audience's rapt attention to this story of distinctly American struggle suggests art might transcend national boundaries in ways that political rhetoric cannot. 🎭



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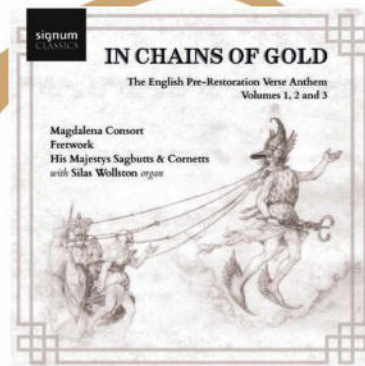
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Harmonic healing:
David soothes King Saul's
troubled mind with his lyre

Rays of light

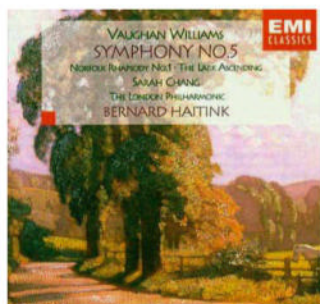
Multiple studies show that music can do wonders for our mental health. So which pieces do we turn to when times are tough?

(1 Samuel 16: 14-23) tells of how David's skills on the lyre would ease King Saul's troubled mind.

So, taking the science and anecdotal evidence as read, let's turn to the here and now. What pieces do people turn to when times are tough and spirits are low? For some, the way out of the abyss may lie in something light and upbeat, for some it might be something soothingly placid, while others turn to something empathetically sorrowful. Here, four *BBC Music* writers, plus the magazine's own editorial staff, share their choices of works to alleviate the gloomiest of times.

Vaughan Williams Symphony No. 5 – *Romanza*

It may sound counterintuitive, but when going through difficult times I have always found that listening to slow, meditative, even melancholy music helps me to work through that negative emotion rather than attempting to mask it with lighter, brighter fare. If ever I'm in need of a good, cleansing cry, listening to John Williams's score for *ET* will absolutely do the trick – just a few bars are enough to bring tears to my eyes.



Music cannot work a magic spell. It can, however, do wonderful things. In recent issues of *BBC Music Magazine*, we have explored the benefits to mental health of listening and playing music, not least when it comes to alleviating depression, though in fact this is a subject that has been addressed literally centuries ago – Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle both discuss it, and the Old Testament

'In my heaven, in my love, in my song': (right) mezzo Janet Baker sings Mahler's *Rückert-Lieder*; (below) Jascha Heifetz's raw recording of Bach's Partita No. 2



But for something deeper – even spiritual – I turn to Vaughan Williams's Fifth Symphony and the third movement *Romanza*, which not only conveys a poignant feeling of nostalgia, but an uplifting sense of beauty. It's that modal tension between major and minor – or, in other words, between sadness and joy – that allows me to experience unhappiness and loss, couched in an elegant structure. The essence of catharsis.

For the ultimate recording, I turn to Bernard Haitink conducting the London Philharmonic Orchestra (EMI Classics, 1995). Haitink doesn't allow himself to wallow in emotion, his tempos perfectly poised – so that VW's homage to a world gone forever never descends into schmaltz. *Charlotte Smith*

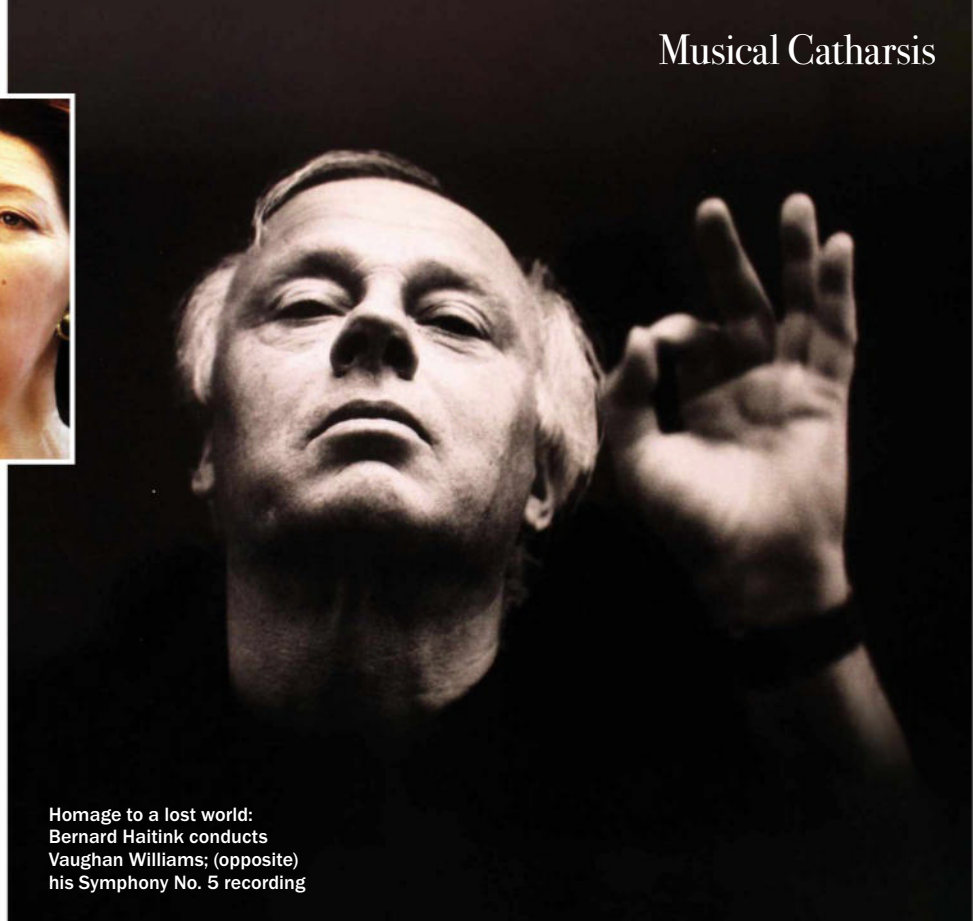
Mahler *Rückert-Lieder* – 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen'

A death foretold enables grief to secure a head start. How to navigate it? Nothing quite equals music in teaching us how to reconcile with impending loss. The *Requiem aeternam* from Duruflé's *Requiem*, Fauré's seraphic setting of the *In Paradisum* and the obligato-oboe-enriched opening aria of Bach's Cantata BWV170, 'Vergnügte Ruh', all invited spiritual solace; but in the event, secularism won out as Mahler, enshrined in the symbiotic sublimity of mezzo Janet Baker and conductor John Barbirolli, plus the poetry of Rückert at its most simply distilled, became an inescapable, endless, go-to.

'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen' (I am lost to the world) from the *Rückert-Lieder* is a heartfelt leave-taking swaddled in tenderness and reassurance. Orchestrally enlarged, beseeching cor anglais and anchoring harp already tremble on the edge of eternity before Baker floats the vocal line with a radiant serenity that intensifies with every passing bar. The final lines, as Rückert rests at last 'in my heaven, in my love, in my song', are achingly poignant – the perfect musical incarnation (without the ambiguity) of Philip Larkin's conclusion to his poem 'An Arundel Tomb': 'what will survive of us is love'. Forty years on, goodnight mum! *Paul Riley*

JS Bach Violin Partita No.2 – *Chaconne*

I don't remember the first time I heard the Bach *Chaconne*, but I do remember how it made me feel. The monumental fifth movement from the Violin Partita No. 2 – its duration surpassing the



Homage to a lost world: Bernard Haitink conducts Vaughan Williams; (opposite) his Symphony No. 5 recording



The *Chaconne* of Bach's Violin Partita No. 2, particularly in Jascha Heifetz's 1971 recording, feels like it encompasses every pain in the world

previous four movements combined – demands complete surrender from its listener.

Its tortured opening chords hurl you into a world of exquisite pain, and through its meticulous structure – a series of variations of varying harmonic and melodic complexity – it becomes one long cry of anguish. The *Chaconne*, particularly in Jascha Heifetz's 1971 recording, feels like it encompasses every pain in the world. Some believe that Bach composed it in mourning his wife, but whether that's true or not, for me it has always signalled a sense of shared universal tragedy; it tears you open so you can start to heal.

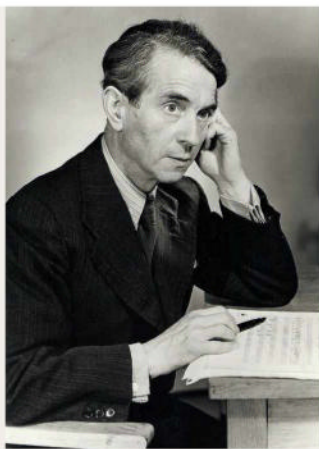
In the midst of the piece's outcry, D minor becomes D major, and, in that moment, you can breathe. That temporary respite offers a hope that even in heartbreak, everything might be okay. The *Chaconne* has always prompted in me a process of release; its passages encompass the confusion and desperation of grief yet somehow offer a sublime solace and freedom in embracing it. Violinist Joshua Bell described it, beautifully, as 'one of the greatest achievements by any man in history... a spiritually powerful piece, emotionally powerful, structurally perfect'.

Miranda Bardsley

L Boulanger

Psalm 130, 'Du fond de l'abîme'

'Never give up hope!' says today's received wisdom. But what if hope is the thing that keeps you stuck: by clinging desperately to the



Composing therapy

Howells's heartfelt tribute

Listening or playing music to alleviate misery is one thing. For composers, sitting down and writing it can also provide a similar cure, and history tells of many instances of them doing just that.

In September 1936, the life of English composer Herbert Howells (pictured above) took an appalling turn for the worse when, just three days after complaining of feeling unwell, his son Michael died of polio, aged just nine. Howells initially responded to the situation with a period of inactivity – ‘too frozen to write’, in his own words. However, it was his daughter Ursula who eventually persuaded him that he might want to remember his beloved ‘Mick’ by composing something in tribute to him.

Howells's *Hymnus Paradisi* was the eventual result. Taking his own Requiem of 1932 as the work's core, Howells devoted every part of himself to creating a large-scale piece for soloists, choir and orchestra, the cathartic process of composing it leading him to describe it as ‘my medical document’.

It was, however, a catharsis that was to remain strictly private. Upon completing it, Howells stored his *Hymnus Paradisi* away until 1950, when he was eventually persuaded by Vaughan Williams to allow it to be performed at the Three Choirs Festival.

Comforting familiarity: Max Richter and violinist Daniel Hope at the world premiere of *Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi – The Four Seasons*, Berlin, 2012

impossible, you rule out living the possible? That's what struck me forcefully when listening to Lili Boulanger's magnificent but disturbing choral-orchestral setting of Psalm 130, ‘Du fond de l'abîme’ – ‘From out of the depths’.

Stunningly gifted, lauded on all sides, Boulanger wrote it as she faced painful death at the age of just 24. There are moments of hope, but the French word ‘espère’ goes on a journey in which all radiance, all comfort is slowly wrung out of it. If the music weren't so exquisitely beautiful, it would be unbearable.

What it did for Boulanger herself I can only guess, but for me, one wintry afternoon 15 years ago, it made me realise that my deeply troubled and troubling mother could never be the mother I'd always hoped she could be, and that for my sake – and perhaps also for hers – that hope had to die. As mezzo Ann Murray took up the desolate solo at the heart of ‘Du fond de l'abîme’, I thought I'd never stop sobbing. But it was a release, and if I'm now better able to face the world as it is, I owe that at least partly to Lili Boulanger.

Stephen Johnson

Recomposed by Max Richter **Vivaldi – *The Four Seasons***

I did not know – nor care – what had happened to the sleeve. It was surplus to requirements: the record on the turntable had not been changed for some weeks. The process of choosing, and listening, to a physical album had become a treasured evening ritual, but at this point in my life, back in 2012, newness was unbearable. The risk of disappointment or displeasure was too great – in fact, any emotional response needed to be carefully managed. Music had to be upbeat (but not jolly, saccharine or too energising) and easy to listen to (but not easy listening), simultaneously raising a depressive mood and neutralising a higher one. The same went for books, films, food, conversations: selection had become an exhausting and dangerous chore.

Now, the familiar yellow centre spun on the record player, in the same way it had for many nights. Strings blurred with electric crackles; a well-worn violin melody etched its way into life. Max Richter's reimagining of Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* somehow fitted my nonsensical cultural brief, comforting in its familiarity yet with enough invention to maintain interest. It's not a work that will induce tears, terror or toil, and that, in this context, was its strength. It remains in my collection – reunited with its case.

Claire Jackson



Rubbra Symphony No. 5

In the later years of her life, deliberately though now unhappily single, my mother leaned on me heavily – for solace, for company, for daily communication. I found myself wrestling with a lot of different feelings, including guilt and sadness on her behalf, but also exasperation at her daily demands on my time and energy. I also found my emotional resources constantly depleted in the quest to reassure her that she'd be OK – that I was here.

During this period, I sought out music of peace and contemplation to recharge my fast-draining emotional batteries. And I found that the symphonies of Edmund Rubbra provided just the calm and pause for nourishment that I needed. A deeply spiritual man, Rubbra wrote music of inner stillness, balance and contemplation, rather than drama or showmanship. Unlike many of his mid-20th-century contemporaries, he avoided angular dissonance and preferred flowing, modal harmonies that feel rooted in ancient chant and Renaissance polyphony.

Even his symphonies, though complex, rarely feel turbulent. Instead, they create a sense of spaciousness. And among them, the work that most often took me to a quiet, unhurried place was No. 5. Its final movement has an uplifting, meditative calm that can always renew me.

Steve Wright



Emotionally nourishing: Rubbra wrote music of inner stillness; (below) Rachmaninov conjures a world of opportunity

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No. 2

Whenever I feel down, I play Rachmaninov. Not just because his music offers a healthy dose of doom-and-gloom and allows for a good emotional wallow, but because his Second Piano Concerto holds a special place in my memory.

Let me take you back: I'd just joined an orchestra for the first time as a nervous and clueless young teenager with barely any experience of playing with other people. I had no idea what to expect, but it certainly wasn't those opening piano chords, tolling like great bells, and then suddenly being swept along by the stirring, surging minor-key melody. More than that: I was playing that melody! And it wasn't complicated – even a fledgling viola player like me could manage the basically stepwise writing. I went home totally overwhelmed by the experience. Who knew music could be like that?

The spark and thrill of discovering Rachmaninov for the first time has always stuck with me. It's become a symbol of possibility: don't give up now, because something totally unexpected that will change your life for the better could be just round the corner. Or at the very least, you might encounter a brilliant piece of music that can transport you to another place for half an hour.

Rebecca Franks



The spark and thrill of discovering Rachmaninov for the first time has always stuck with me. It's become a symbol of possibility

Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6, 'Pathétique' – *Allegro molto vivace*

To be honest, when my spirits are at their lowest, I want to be surrounded by silence – playing music is likely to prove more of an irritant than a balm. There is, however, one exception: the third-movement march from Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' Symphony, a reliable friend whose company I've enjoyed since my parents played it in the car when I was a youngster (LSO, Leopold Stokowski, coffee-coloured cassette case).

Right from the outset, it was all about the frisky main tune, based on a pair of perky perfect-fourth intervals and first played in full by the clarinet – which, as I'd sussed from the cat in Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf*, is the orchestra's most genial, happy-go-lucky member. I often found myself humming that tune to cheer myself up in gloomier moments – not least, as a boarder at the world's most wretched choir school – and doing so still works its magic today.

Of course, I appreciate now that in the context of the whole symphony, and particularly the collapse into abject misery that follows, the third movement's projection of optimism can be viewed as hollow or even desperate. However, my nine-year-old self didn't see it that way, and – as a standalone piece, at least – it still defiantly says to my adult self 'Cheer up, JP. There are better times ahead.'

Jeremy Pound



Stolen strings

Michael White tells how a violin, cruelly confiscated by the Nazis but now recovered, has inspired a new work by Huw Watkins about its heroic owner

Musical instruments have power, simply as things. They speak. They generate emotion. They tell stories about life, death, happiness and sadness – and about the past, which they can resurrect with curious intensity. Stringed instruments that have acquired a certain age, passed down the generations from one player to the next, have this potential more than most – particularly violins which come charged with the resonance of myth and folklore.

Take Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*, which offers you the image of a violin as a human soul, bartered and coveted by both its owner and the devil. And it's no coincidence that the small

wooden soundpost hidden in the body of a violin is called an 'anima' by the Italians or an 'âme' in French. They both mean 'soul': something that lives on when the flesh gives way. And modern history is full of real-life stories about violins that live to tell a tale, as witnesses to things past. Often things that people might prefer forgotten.

One such story came to light this summer, with peculiar impact, in a tiny German town called Freden you're unlikely to have heard of. Halfway between Hanover and Göttingen, but otherwise the middle of nowhere, it's a place of near-asphyxiating uneventfulness and quiet. There's an unmanned station where most trains don't stop, a church and one or two not very



Small place, big ambition: Camerata Freden performs at its home-town music festival



A hidden history: (main pic) Freden Music Festival founder Adrian Adlam holds the Rosetz violin and confers with composer Huw Watkins and tenor James Gilchrist; (left) librettist Zoe Gilbert was inspired by Latvian folklore

useful, generally closed shops – among them an old-fashioned cobbler who makes orthopaedic shoes, with wooden casts of long-dead clients' feet displayed in his shop window.

But curiously, the town has an annual music festival: a serious, successful, hugely enterprising one run by an English violinist whose father-in-law happens to be the orthopaedic shoe-maker. A story in itself.

Rosetz was married to a Jewish pianist and refused official Nazi pressure to divorce her

Some 35 years ago, Adrian Adlam – who would go on to be a longtime member of both the London Symphony Orchestra and Oxford Philharmonic – was playing with the Luxembourg Philharmonic alongside a violist, Utz Köster, who had been born and raised in Freden. Between them they set up the Freden Music Festival designed to flood this little place with big ideas – and new commissions.

As the ideas grew, and Adlam found himself coming to Freden on a frequent basis, he fell in love with the shoemaker's daughter (which sounds like something out of the Brothers Grimm but is happily true), married her, and turned the festival into a permanent fixture – inviting out coachloads of British musicians in the process, including composers like John Woolrich, Tansy Davies and Michael Finnissy who have all had first performances in the town.

Starry contacts from the LSO like Colin Davis and Mstislav Rostropovich were prevailed on to lend their names to the enterprise. And three decades on it's a still-thriving project, staging concerts in a stylishly renovated tithe

barn; in the local church where a low-hanging Baroque angel – wooden, life-sized (depending on your idea of angelic stature) – presides over the performances; and in outlying venues that include a Bauhaus factory built by Walter Gropius in nearby Alfeld, as well as a vintage car museum in the brewing town of Einbeck.

That so much of the music is either very new or very old (a lot of repertoire this year connected with the ancient Spanish pilgrim route to Compostela) doesn't put off audiences, who travel in from miles around. And this year's star turn was a new commission – from composer Huw Watkins and writer Zoe Gilbert – inspired by a local story, about a violin, with resonances that hit home in modern Germany where dark tales about World War II have settled into distant history but can't (and shouldn't) be forgotten.

The story came to Adlam via a man from the next village who, in 1955 when he was ten, was given a violin bought by his mother from an acquaintance. Not expensive, it had been made in the 18th century by the Hopf family of German luthiers and would sell today for around £5,000. But it came with a story beyond price.

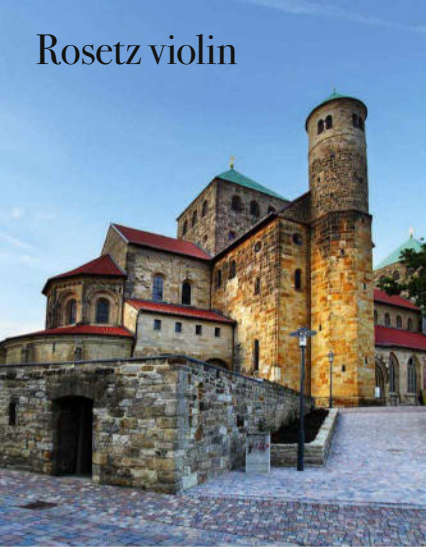
In the 1920s/30s it had belonged to Alois Rosetz, a Berlin-based musician working as concertmaster for the impresario Max Reinhardt. He was not a Jew, and might have been left safe to flourish under the Third Reich. But he was married to a Latvian-Jewish pianist, one Solomea Graudan, and refused official pressure to divorce her – for which he was, in 1933, blacklisted from meaningful employment.

He tried emigrating to Latvia, where German émigrés were unwelcome but tolerated, and eventually found work as concertmaster for the Libau Opera on the Baltic Sea. But then in 1940 Germany invaded. After a tense period of cat-and-mouse with the new authorities, both Alois and Solomea were arrested for 'treachery'. Solomea was shot. Alois was beaten and imprisoned, sent back to Berlin and put on trial for his life – an ordeal he somehow survived but still ended up as slave labour in an armaments factory, with all his possessions confiscated.

In 1945, he got caught in crossfire from a Berlin street battle, receiving a wound to his arm that meant he could never play again. And he spent the next ten years trying to retrieve his home and goods. A valuable Bergonzi violin proved totally untraceable. But he did manage to track down the Hopf – which stayed with him until he died in 1955, and was then sold on by his sister.

'When the current owner, who happens to be a festival supporter, asked if I'd like to see this ▶





Town that time forgot *Freden and its surrounds*

Freden isn't exactly a destination, but it sits in the middle of rolling countryside dotted with picture-book villages that are. For anyone interested in the Freden Music Festival (fredenmusiktag.de), it's an 80-minute drive from Hanover.

There's only one hotel, the Steinhof, and you'll have stayed in better. But the staff are friendly. And when you need escape, there are nearby places like Einbeck: an ancient town whose streets are lined with 16th-century brewers' houses leading to a classic German market square with cafes.

Slightly further away is Hildesheim, whose majestic churches were all but flattened by wartime bombs but have been handsomely rebuilt in an austere but stylish way that honours their original architecture. What's more, many of their treasures were saved by removal before hostilities began. So, the church of St Michael's still has its 13th century painted wooden ceiling. And Hildesheim Domkirche (above) boasts magnificent 11th-century carved bronze doors, a medieval font and two massive wheel-shaped chandeliers from 1061.

There's also an idyllic garden-cloister with a rosebush that's supposedly flowered for a thousand years – though how it survived the bombs is a mystery.



Living witness: 'When I heard the story of the violin, I thought we simply had to do something with it,' says Adrian Adlam; (left) Hildesheim Domkirche, near Freden

Hopf and told me the story, I thought we simply had to do something with it,' says Adlam. 'So, I contacted Huw Watkins, whose music we'd programmed in the festival before. He brought in Zoe Gilbert, who had previously written a libretto for his wife, the composer Helen Grime. And we finally settled on a piece to be called *Stolen Songs* for the unusual combination of voice (the tenor James Gilchrist) and violin (me).

'The violin initially sounded pleasant but underpowered. But it has more punch now'

'We wanted to use the actual Hopf violin for the performance, to reinforce the historical connection. And I have to say I had a moment of panic about that because, when I took it out of its case, it sounded pleasant but underpowered and slightly nasal. But I took it to a luthier who did some work on it. It has more punch now. It delivers. And I'm pleased with the result.'

As is Huw Watkins, who admits to being apprehensive about taking the commission. 'Writing for just violin and voice is horribly exposing and I was tempted to bring in a piano as well. But that would have diluted the focus on the fiddle, which needs to be a spotlight character in its own right. But by luck I heard some Vaughan Williams settings for voice and violin that I thought totally convincing and showed me a way forward. And I've used a lot of double and triple stopping in the violin part to thicken the textures and give it a stronger harmonic grounding.

'Another problem, though, was the potential awkwardness of British people presenting a World War II narrative to a German audience in a small German town where there are inherited memories. But that's where Zoe's text comes in – with a humanity that universalises the story and lifts it out of a purely German context.'

'One thing I knew from the start,' says Zoe Gilbert, 'was that this couldn't simply tell the story of Alois and Solomea. It had to be more abstractly poetic – about grief, loss, memory – built round the central tension of a man forced to choose between his wife and his art.

'Much of my work as a writer is steeped in folk traditions; and as the wife here was Latvian, I did some research into Latvian folklore and song, borrowing images that have been ways to talk metaphorically about death. There's a standard folklore imagery of "singing bones" where someone comes across the remains of a dead person, usually murdered, and fashions them into a musical instrument – only to find that the bones will sing nothing but the story of the murder. So, I made use of that. It felt like a useful connection without laying things on too thick.'

Played out in the Freden church beneath the life-sized angel – hanging ominously between the singer and violinist like a pasty-faced figure of judgement – the result was powerful and confronting. There were members of the audience close to tears. And this in a place where a disturbingly high percentage voted for the far right in the last elections, while one aged inhabitant is known every year to celebrate the birthday of Adolf Hitler. Or so I was apologetically told by a more liberal resident.

The theme in *Stolen Songs* of something that, against the odds, survives as living witness to a cruel history struck chords in every sense. And that the something – Alois Rosetz's violin – was there onstage to tell the story of its one-time owner, like the singing bones of Zoe Gilbert's text, was extraordinary: a physical connection between past and present that the text poetically describes. 'Hands warm your bones now, warm in the summer sun. You sing for us the memory of uncountable losses and one.'

A modest Hopf violin isn't a Strad and doesn't sing so sweetly; but in Freden's little church we experienced a noble soul released from years of silence. The mere survival of this fiddle offered something in the way of healing: instruments certainly have power, simply as things. But to be living things, you have to feed them living art. Then they take flight and soar like angels. More than life-sized, though still made of wood. 🎻



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Screen **players**

Actors 'playing' instruments on screen can be the stuff of nightmares. But, asks **Michael Beek**, to what lengths have they gone to make it look convincing?

In *Humoresque* (1946), John Garfield plays a virtuoso violinist. By then, Garfield was an Oscar-nominated actor, but he was no violinist. That said, his 'performances' are pretty convincing. Why? Because at least one of his arms is actually that of the great Isaac Stern. Similarly, in *Deception* (1946), a film released a few months prior, Paul Henreid plays a leading cellist. His performances were achieved thanks to the arms of a pair of professional cellists, accommodated by Henreid's oversized jacket. Cosy...

Smoke and mirrors can only do so much, though, and not all filmmakers go to such creative lengths. So, is it fair to say you can spot a fake musician a mile off? Julian Lloyd Webber certainly thinks so. 'When you see them, they're pretty much always terrible,' says the British cellist; 'it's rare that you see them and think they've actually got it right. I mean *Deception* does, because they've got people who are professionals doing that job. I think it's not possible for someone who doesn't play at all to make a convincing job of it. I don't see how they can. *Shine* was pretty good... the fact he played the piano himself just says it all.'

He is of course referring to Scott Hicks's 1996 film, in which Geoffrey Rush gave an Oscar-winning performance as Australian pianist David Helfgott. Rush played as a youngster and happily returned to the keyboard to put in the hours to take on the role; indeed, he performs on screen himself, even in close-up. The actors playing the younger Helfgott in flashbacks, Alex Rafalowicz and Noah Taylor, were hand-doubled in close-up by pianists Simon Tedeschi

and Martin Cousin. It's a well-tested means of capturing a more realistic performance.

Unlike Geoffrey Rush, and despite months of tuition and practice, actor Adrian Brody used a hand double for his role as Władysław Szpilman in Roman Polanski's *The Pianist* (2002). Janusz Olejniczak did the honours for the performance, which otherwise won Brody an Oscar.

Someone with experience of hand doubling is French pianist Alexandre Tharaud, whose

'It's rare that you see an actor playing an instrument and think they've got it right'

fingers recently appeared in Anne Fontaine's *Boléro*, about Maurice Ravel – he also plays music critic Pierre Lalo in the film. Actor Raphaël Personnaz portrays Ravel and while he undertook piano lessons for the role, it is Tharaud doing a lot of the work, as he explains. 'When you see the hands with his face it's him, but when you see only the hands it's *my* hands. Sometimes you see his hands, then my hands, then his hands, and we have totally different hands! But nobody thought that was a problem...'

Tharaud shared a costume with Personnaz in order to match the sleeves on camera, pre-recorded the tracks for them both to play to on set, shot scenes at Ravel's Parisian house and even played Ravel's piano. He admits it was a surreal experience. 'I wore the same suit

Facing the music:
James Stewart learned the
trombone for his role in *The
Glenn Miller Story*; (below)
Geoffrey Rush played
pianist David Helfgott
in 1996's *Shine*







Multi-talented:
Jamie Foxx plays
the piano in 2002

Musical chops

Actors who really can play

It's one thing for an actor to learn enough to look like they know what they're doing, but some actors really do know. **Jeff Goldblum** has played the piano since he was a kid and transferred those skills to some of his iconic screen characters, including Seth Brundle in David Cronenberg's *The Fly* (1986).

Also no stranger to the keyboard is **Jamie Foxx**, who studied piano in San Diego and at Juilliard. He famously played pianist Ray Charles in the 2005 film *Ray* and won an Oscar for his efforts. Just a few years later he learned to play the cello when he took on the role of real-life street virtuoso Nathaniel Ayers in the 2009 drama *The Soloist*.

Dermot Mulroney is a classically trained cellist who has performed on a number



of film scores by composer Michael Giacchino, including *Rogue One*, while **Forest Whitaker** (left) is an

accomplished saxophonist – he played Charlie Parker in 1988's *Bird*. Actors who have let their musical roots dry out somewhat include **Julia Roberts**, who once played clarinet in her high school band, **Tina Fey**, who played the flute at school, and **Ewan McGregor**, who was a French horn player in his youth.

Dedication to the craft: (right) Emily Watson carried a cello with her for months to play Jacqueline du Pré; (below) Jenna Ortega learned the cello for *Wednesday*; (below, right) pianist Alexandre Tharaud's hands appear in *Boléro*

and robe as Raphaël, so it was a little bit sweaty. I played to the playback of what I recorded three weeks before, on the same model of piano – when I recorded it, I tried to play with mistakes, because Ravel wasn't a good pianist. So, I was dressed as Ravel, at his piano playing to my own recording, which was trying to imitate him! It was a very deep connection and it's difficult to explain what I felt.'

In these cases, the need for an actor to take to the keyboard or pick up a bow is unavoidable, music being at the heart of the story. But sometimes film or TV characters just happen to be written as musicians. Tim Burton's Netflix series *Wednesday* sees the titular Wednesday Addams, iconic from decades-old comic strips, movies and TV series, recast as a cellist. For the producers it was a means of allowing the character (a closed book, emotionally) to open up, the cello an outlet for her feelings. That's all well and good, but for Jenna Ortega (who plays her) it meant not only breathing life into Addams but getting to grips with the cello. I show Julian Lloyd Webber a clip and ask what he thinks of her technique. 'I was impressed by the fact that she'd bothered to actually learn the cello a little bit,' he replies. 'Although it's obvious she's not playing that complicated piece, at least you know she's had a go.'

Plenty of actors have 'had a go' with varying levels of success. James Stewart learned the trombone for *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954) and apparently had every intention of being heard in the film. Alas, the sound he made was so bad he



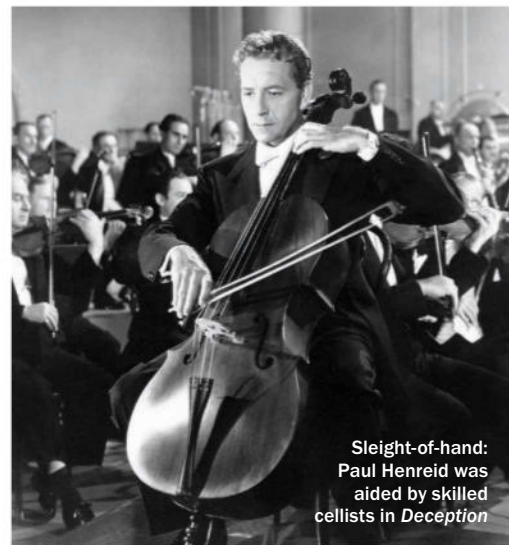
mimed to recordings of his coach, Joe Yukl. Ryan Gosling learned at the keyboard for months before playing a fictional jazz pianist in *La La Land* (2016), while Emily Watson carried a cello around with her for a lengthy period ahead of portraying Jacqueline du Pré in Anand Tucker's *Hilary and Jackie* (1998). Watson was coached by cellist Caroline Dale, who performed most of what we hear in the film, and Watson received an Oscar nomination for her portrayal. It's not a film Lloyd Webber is keen to champion, however, having known the real du Pré. 'I think Emily Watson was very good, but it was a sort of hatchet job, really, and I'm very against the film. There were so many bad things in it; the worst, and the one that you know just would never happen, was when you see her leave her Stradivari out overnight in the snow in Russia. That is just stupid.'

Weather-related offences aside, I ask Lloyd Webber if it is perhaps more difficult to pretend to play a stringed instrument over, say, the piano, which an actor can hide behind to a certain degree. 'I think it probably is more difficult,' he says, 'because if you need to do a full front shot – which would have been the case in something like *Hilary and Jackie* – you know it's got to be right. And it seldom is!'

Alexandre Tharaud rightly points out that there is more to playing the piano than we might think, though. 'On a piano it's not just the



In at the deep end:
actors Philip Seymour
Hoffman and Mark
Ivanir in *A Late Quartet*



Sleight-of-hand:
Paul Henreid was
aided by skilled
cellists in *Deception*

fingers; it's a chain of muscles. We play with the whole body, the legs, the feet; the position is your relationship with the stage. So, if an actor tries to play piano, they will play with the fingers, and they are too focused on the keyboard.'

It's a huge amount for an actor to take on, then, whatever the instrument, and while the likes of Julian Lloyd Webber might prefer that actors simply leave it to the professionals, some actors have gone the extra mile in order to pass muster.

In *A Late Quartet* (2012), the late Philip Seymour Hoffman played the second violinist of a fictional New York string quartet (the Fugue Quartet). He threw himself into learning the instrument months before shooting began and was coached by violinist Nanae Iwata. The pair had weekly lessons, and Hoffman immersed himself in the violin. And it wasn't just hold and technique; he wanted to understand every facet of how to live and work with the instrument and his quartet mates, as Iwata shares. 'He asked how he would shift in his seat, or how he would talk to the others; eyelines etc. I don't even think about those things, so I was then paying attention to them in order to help him. Even things like how you would hold the case, how you would open it and chit-chat while getting the instrument ready. He really wanted to feel comfortable doing that, so he practised at home. He told me, "I practised for 20 minutes straight, just opening the case and putting it back while I was talking to someone,



“If we used digital effects the money would have to be taken from somewhere else in the budget. I would have been Ravel, but only up to my neck!”

and it was really difficult!" He wanted to look legit, and he really worked hard on it.'

Iwata was on set, too, when Hoffman had to 'play' – his movement, body language, fingering and bowing were all carefully choreographed to the music: Beethoven's Op. 131 String Quartet. This was after hours of time together, Hoffman sometimes videoing Iwata or practising fingering and vibrato to make it look like he was a seasoned player. She was impressed by his commitment. 'He wanted to feel like it was really coming from within him,' she remembers, 'and I really respected that.'

Like Hoffman, fellow actors Mark Ivanir (violin) and Catherine Keener (viola) did all their own 'playing' on camera, with Christopher Walken (cello) the only one to use a hand double for close ups. Much like Paul Henreid in 1946's *Deception*, Walken's left hand was that of cellist David Bakamjian, who snuggled into the actor's back wearing matching shirtsleeves to blend in.

Today, digital effects are another way that filmmakers can attempt to maintain the crucial musicality of a real player. For her 2019 film *Blanche comme neige*, director Anne Fontaine simply replaced a real viola da gamba player's head with an actor's. It's an expensive option, but one Alexandre Tharaud tells me they discussed using in Fontaine's *Boléro*. 'We were told we had to choose; if we did that, the money would have to be taken from somewhere else in the budget. I would have been Ravel, but only up to my neck!'

Pasting an actor's head onto a musician's body might solve part of the puzzle when depicting realistic music-making on screen, but would we buy it even then? When we're expected to believe that the person we're watching is not just playing the music, but hearing it and feeling it as well, something will surely always be lost in translation. 🎻

Mum's the word

New motherhood and its effects on the careers of professional musicians is a subject rarely broached. It's time to break the silence, says **Anne Templer**

Among the many remarkable aspects of Clara Schumann's life was the fact that she gave birth to eight children – seven of whom lived to adulthood. Given she lived in the 19th century, it is astonishing that she continued her career as an international concert pianist throughout her pregnancies – and indeed was still pregnant with her last child when husband Robert was committed to an asylum.

While not quite at Clara's level, many musicians today must navigate significant obstacles associated with pregnancy and childbirth, yet curiously the topic is often avoided. This may come from a place of good intention – to avoid appearing sexist, fellow professionals prefer to concentrate on safer, work-related topics. But to ignore this profound event seems neglectful and unnecessary. Becoming a mother is, after all, one of life's most significant milestones and cannot simply be boxed neatly away. The impacts are spiritual, creative, mental and physical, and being aware of how pregnancy and childbirth affect female musicians does matter.

For cultural and financial reasons, many contemporary women have fewer children – and later in life – than in Clara Schumann's day. But whatever their age, coping with very early stages of pregnancy can, for some, throw up a number of different obstacles. 'When I fell pregnant, I was gigging one to three nights per week, every week,' Claire, a saxophonist and clarinetist, reveals to me. 'I was so sick (with hyperemesis gravidarum) that I wasn't able to manage one gig throughout the whole pregnancy.'

Often, though, it is the physical consequences of giving birth that have far-reaching implications. Some mothers have caesareans which – as a midwife once explained to me – 'is a major abdominal surgery. Ironically, if you hadn't had a baby, we would be keeping you in hospital for five days instead of two.' 'Having sailed through my pregnancy, I had a difficult delivery – a caesarean with a bad recovery,' says Sam, a saxophonist and flautist. 'I think it was a

'I was so sick that I wasn't able to manage one gig throughout the whole pregnancy'

bit of a botched job – I experienced excruciating pain and then breast-feeding problems. I didn't leave my house for nearly a month.' Says Lizzie, a violinist: 'My baby was a very violent birth... I had a lot of stitching. That was very painful. Luckily, I wasn't playing a wind instrument requiring lots of diaphragm work.'

The contrast with Clara Schumann's experience is stark. As Nancy B Reich explains in her book *Clara Schumann: The Artist and the Woman*, 'Almost exactly one year after their marriage, Clara gave birth to... her first born. The delivery was not difficult... In the next 13 years, Clara was to give birth to seven more children... (she) conceived very easily, generally had uncomplicated pregnancies, and evidently made no attempt to prevent conception.' Aside



Challenging times:
early motherhood presents
significant obstacles to
professional musicians;
(right) Clara Schumann with
her first child, Marie



from Clara's ability to conceive, her apparently unmatched capacity for going back to work so promptly may in part be explained by her instrument; playing the piano obviously required no heavy lifting or blowing, and of course was played from a seated position.

Through discussions, it emerges that new mothers who play wind instruments must cope with significant challenges. Woodwind and brass professionals struggle with lifting the larger instruments, as well as coping with diaphragm pressure once they start to play again. From a clarinet/sax player: 'I did lose control of my pelvic floor... it's a horrible feeling. It's to do with the pressure of blowing.' And from a violinist: 'I would say the backache I experienced after giving birth was much more intense. Practising felt quite different, sitting in the same position in a three-hour rehearsal... you're maintaining that posture for quite a long time.'

Physical challenges, however, are equally matched by the practical. And here, culturally and fundamentally, our 21st-century mothers part company with Clara's experience. Reich again: 'Once she realised that wet-nurses were available, that the baby could be boarded with relatives, that an additional maid could be hired for a pittance, that motherhood did not necessarily tie her down, she wasted no time.'

While wet-nurses in the present day are not obsolete, my group of musician interviewees do not mention them – though a support network of extended family is hugely appreciated, if not essential, particularly when organising childcare during unconventional working hours. One West End player required support closer to home; her partner wasn't a musician and was unwilling or unable to adapt his routine to fit with her freelance lifestyle. Meanwhile, an orchestral player originally on a full-time contract struggled to go back to work due to



No pregnant pauses

Lidiya Yankovskaya

'When I had my first kid,' posted Lidiya Yankovskaya on social media in 2022, 'people told me that no one wanted to see a pregnant conductor, that I couldn't possibly conduct while caring for a newborn, and that being a mother and being a conductor are incompatible.'

This was, in fact, something that the Russian-American conductor had proved entirely untrue the previous year when, as the music director of the Chicago Opera Theatre, she took to the podium to conduct the company's final performance of *Becoming Santa Claus*... just three days after giving birth to her second child. A pregnant Yankovskaya had begun conducting the Mark Adamo opera in Chicago eight days earlier – on 11 December – and left audiences stunned when she returned to the stage to close the run.

This event joined a long list of stand-out moments from the career of this trailblazing conductor and cultural advocate who, throughout her career, has spoken candidly about her experiences as a woman and mother in the music sector, and has shaped the development of dozens of world premieres, commissioning no fewer than 11 operas during her seven-season tenure at the Chicago Opera Theatre.



Sax o'clock struggle: 'When the kids were small, I couldn't do two nights of gigging in a row,' says one player; (left) conductor Lidiya Yankovskaya took the briefest of breaks

the orchestra's schedule of evening concerts and rehearsals: 'When I was in the orchestra, the only way people managed to carry on was either by paying a nanny (difficult because of the hours) or by organising a job share. But the orchestra wasn't keen on job shares because it felt neither person would be able to commit to touring.'

If job share options in the West End or symphony orchestras were available (the 'moon on a stick' according to one musician),

Many women are frightened of losing work and have a strong urge to keep playing

the apparently insurmountable hurdles of continuing to play might well be removed. Financially, however, all the musicians I spoke to have managed to muddle through – mostly through limited financial planning, 'winging it' and the ability to work on a freelance basis – no matter how weak or exhausted their energy levels. Private teaching, in particular, is seen as an essential source of income, both for the flexibility of time and location that it offers, and because it allows the mother to stay in touch with music.

The practicalities of returning to work are arguably less complicated than the emotional strain of leaving very young children in the care of others. For some mothers, this is the hardest barrier of all – going against their very powerful instincts to care for their babies. Despite this, many women are frightened of losing work and have the strong urge to keep playing, as being a

musician is an intrinsic aspect of their identity. Says Sam: 'When I wasn't playing, I wasn't really fulfilled or happy.' Claire adds: 'When the kids were small, I couldn't do two nights of gigging in a row. They would unravel the next day, even though they were being looked after by family. They just needed their mum more than I could be around.' Violist Juliet, after giving birth to three children, says quite simply: 'I felt I was missing out.'

The desire to practise a craft perfected over years of training is something all the women I spoke to crave. And they acknowledge the strange paradox that having children is singly the most creative act possible, yet diminishes – for a while, at least – the ability to create through music. Those who recognise the need for both, and have a sufficient support system, characterise their experience as fulfilling, despite exhaustion and an emotional and physical rollercoaster journey.

Here, too, Clara was possessed of enough self-awareness to know that musical exploration was an essential expression of her life: 'Her art gave her more than solace: performing for audiences provided... love,' writes Reich. 'Without (music) she would not have the strength to [withstand] the illnesses, deaths and tragedies that were the regular companions of her life...' Wrote Clara herself, 'It often seemed to me – and still does – that when I played, my overburdened soul was relieved, as if I had truly cried myself out.'

Clara's vastly long working life should reassure women today. Although few enjoy an international virtuoso career, it is certainly reasonable to think of music-making as a lifelong vocation. Current average lifespans dictate the likelihood of a 50-year career – and many would prefer much more than that. Taking the time to rear children doesn't necessarily mean the end of that career, though the twin threat of lost skills and contacts is surely a concern. The mothers I spoke to were stoic in the face of financial fears and the cultural pressures to be 'super-women'.

Many described themselves as 'lucky' at being able to navigate this period of their lives – and while it is a great gift to have a child, they were notably anxious to sweep under the carpet the sheer bravery and tenacity required to survive injuries and sleep deprivation, and to manage household affairs (every woman I spoke to continued to do the lion's share) while perusing a creative life. They consistently underestimated their achievements – indeed, felt they 'could have done more'. Far from it; they are noble and courageous – and should be saluted. ☺



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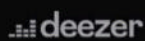
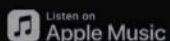
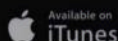
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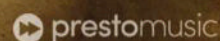


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Trieste Italy

John-Pierre Joyce heads to the very corner of Italy to enjoy the cultural riches of a city whose list of musical visitors is both long and illustrious

Cosmopolitan hub:
the Canal Grande in the
centre of Trieste; (above
right) the Teatro Verdi,
where the composer himself
conducted *Stiffelio* in 1850



In her 2001 book about the city, travel writer Jan Morris famously described Trieste as 'the meaning of nowhere' – a place left behind by history and by its political geography. A quarter of a century later, Morris might have seen the Adriatic port city and capital of Italy's Friuli-Venezia Giulia region differently. Some of the bittersweet melancholy that she detected still remains: nostalgia for its heyday as Austria-Hungary's principal port of empire; dark memories of Fascist and Nazi rule; the legacy of a precarious

existence on the frontline of the Cold War. But the general mood in Trieste these days is very much on the up. The splendid Habsburg-era buildings have been spruced up, the central Piazza Unità d'Italia and the waterfront have been pedestrianised and the city's authorities and cultural institutions have embraced the potential of Trieste's past, present and future position at the cosmopolitan intersection of Mitteleuropa.

Music has always been at the heart of Trieste's cultural life, bringing together

the city's diverse population of Italians, Slovenes, Croats, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs, Greeks and others. The Teatro Verdi opera house (commissioned by a Tuscan diplomat and designed by German and Venetian architects) opened in 1801 with premieres of operas by Simon Mayr and Antonio Salieri. Verdi came here in 1850 to conduct the first performance of *Stiffelio*, and in 1901 the theatre was the first in the world to rename itself after the composer, just hours after his death. The Teatro Verdi was also one of the first



Irish eyes: James Joyce's statue in Trieste

Portrait of a Trieste resident James Joyce



James Joyce lived in Trieste from 1905-15 and again in 1919-20. Among the works he wrote there were *Dubliners*, *A Portrait of the*

Artist as a Young Man and the poetry collection *Chamber Music*. He played the guitar and piano and had a good tenor voice. He took lessons from the conservatory's choral singing teacher and sang in the Act III quintet from Wagner's *Mastersingers* at a concert there in 1909. Joyce was a frequent concert-goer and enjoyed opera in particular, although he objected to the 'symphony of smells' coming from the cheaper seats of the Teatro Verdi.

music venues in what is now modern Italy to promote the Austro-German repertoire – a tradition reflected today in its annual opera and concert season, which begins in November. Wagner's operas received early performances here, and in 1907 Gustav Mahler came to conduct a programme that included the Prelude to *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg* and his own First Symphony. Two years earlier, Mahler had brought his Fifth Symphony to the nearby Politeama Rossetti theatre. The Trieste orchestra, he wrote to his wife Alma, was 'excellently prepared, ardent and enthusiastic', while the people of the city were 'charming'. Today, the Rossetti mainly puts on prose theatre, but in March it will host the Vienna Symphony Orchestra for their annual three-day visit to the city.

The score that Mahler used for the performance of his Fifth is kept at Trieste's 'Giuseppe Tartini' Music Conservatory, which, from October, runs a programme of free concerts by students, teachers and other professional musicians. The orchestral parts for Mahler's 1905 concert, meanwhile, found their way into the archive of the Carlo Schmidl Theatre Museum – named after the music publisher and collector who helped bring Mahler to Trieste. Housed in the huge Palazzo Gopcevic, the museum has an impressive collection of musical artefacts and memorabilia, including instruments, stage designs, posters and autograph material by Rossini, Verdi, Boito and Puccini. Also on display are costumes worn by the celebrated Trieste-born mezzo-soprano Fedora Barbieri, who made her debut at La Scala, Milan in 1942 under the baton of another famous Triestine, the conductor Victor de Sabata.

The writer James Joyce lived and worked in Trieste in the early 20th century (see right) and was impressed by the variety of music to be heard around the city. Today, the Trieste Concert Society (founded in 1932) organises orchestral concerts and chamber and solo recitals in churches and museums, plus major venues such as the

The Trieste orchestra, wrote Mahler, was 'excellently prepared and enthusiastic'

Teatro Verdi. Open-air brass ensembles can also be heard in the main squares and along the waterfront to mark special events or to welcome ships and sailing boats to the old harbour – a throwback to Habsburg times and also a reminder that Léhar came here in 1898 to take up the post of director of the Imperial and Royal Navy band.

Further up the coast, the neo-Gothic-style Miramare Castle hosts occasional recitals. It was from here that the ill-fated

Archduke Maximilian sailed for Mexico in 1864 to become the strife-torn country's unwanted emperor. Had he known what was in store for him – execution by firing squad three years later – and considered the real meaning of nowhere, he might have turned around and headed straight back to the safe shores of Trieste. 📍

Info: teatroverdi-trieste.com



Coastal pad:
Miramare Castle;
(right) the ill-fated
Archduke
Maximilian





Composer of the Week
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3-7 November **Michael Haydn**

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17-21 November **Wagner**

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Legrand's style

Neoclassicism Lyricist Alan Bergman described 'The Windmills of Your Mind' as 'a long Baroque melody', and much of Legrand's music was influenced by JS Bach. His theme for *Vivre sa Vie* recalls the *St Matthew Passion*, while his score for *The Go-Between* (below) was, Legrand said, 'like the *Brandenburg Concertos*'.

Modernism *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968) may contain Legrand's most famous pop song, but the soundtrack also includes some striking modernisms. At one tense moment, Legrand gradually stacks up a fully 12-note chord, introducing every chromatic note with an intervallic logic of which any pupil of Schoenberg's would have been proud.

Songwriting The melody of 'The Windmills of Your Mind', as often with Legrand, is built up from sequential repetitions of the same phrase. Also characteristic is its circular nature. As his lyricists commented: 'Michel hates to see anything end, so his melodies have a tendency to begin again under the last note – like mirrors reflecting into infinity.'

Jazz Legrand was equally skilled working – in a rich jazz harmonic language – with any size of ensemble, from piano trio to big band. Sometimes

the worlds of jazz and the Baroque collided headlong in his music, as in his Swingle Singers-like score for the war comedy *Castle Keep* (1969).



Michel Legrand

With a portfolio ranging from iconic film scores to jazz standards and even a piano concerto, the versatile Frenchman is hailed by *Mervyn Cooke*

ILLUSTRATION: MATT HERRING

'What Americans call safe music bores me,' declared Michel Legrand in a 2005 interview, in which he reflected on the high profile he had achieved as one of the world's leading film composers. 'If you're expecting music that has no surprises,' he continued, 'then it's no use calling me.'

It was a fitting summary of a remarkable compositional career in which Legrand's stylistic versatility embraced not only an unusually wide variety of film-scoring styles, but also jazz, pop songs, musical theatre and concert works. As well as his seemingly effortless skills as a tunesmith, he was just as capable of

in his bloodstream from an early age. Inspired by the playing of trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie's big band on their visit to Paris in 1947, Legrand initially devoted himself to a career as a jazz pianist, composer and arranger. In 1954, he became music director for the famed singer Maurice Chevalier and this provided him with the opportunity to visit New York.

At this time he also made his first album, *I Love Paris*, commissioned by Columbia to promote increasingly popular French chansons in English translations. But the high point of his jazz recording career came with *Legrand Jazz* (1958), for which he secured the services of a line-up of

'If you are expecting music that has no surprises,' said Legrand, 'it's no use calling me'

writing sophisticated orchestral music, and in doing so exploited the technical dexterity he had learned as a student at the Paris Conservatoire. He attended this prestigious institution from eleven to 17, studying with (among others) Nadia Boulanger, developing his performing talents as a multi-instrumentalist and ultimately graduating with the first prize in composition. In his twilight years as an octogenarian, the indefatigable Legrand returned to his classical roots by composing concertos for piano, cello and harp, as well as a ballet score. He recorded his Piano Concerto himself in 2016 – one critic described its first movement as 'a little like the Ravel G major on speed'.

Born in 1932, Legrand was the son of the bandleader and composer Raymond Legrand – who had studied with Fauré – and, not surprisingly, he had jazz firmly

stellar American musicians, among them Miles Davis, Bill Evans, John Coltrane and Ben Webster. Legrand continued playing and recording jazz throughout his career, and several hit songs from his later film scores became jazz standards.

During the 1950s, Legrand helped to orchestrate his father's film scores, recalling that Raymond would often call him at 3am in a panic because he didn't have the materials ready for a looming recording session. Michel's own entrée into the world of film scoring came at the end of the decade, when he became associated with the work of the emerging young French directors who represented the New Wave (*nouvelle vague*). As with many of those directors, his first assignments were for documentary films, until the explosion of the (sometimes strikingly experimental) feature films these cinematic

GETTY





innovators went on to make in the early 1960s.

The most controversial of the New Wave directors was Jean-Luc Godard, who became notorious for taking what many felt were shocking liberties with every parameter of his films: images, dialogue, sound, music and narrative logic

could all be subjected to fragmentation and distortion, with the resulting (and often disconcerting) effects sometimes conceived seemingly at random.

Godard could also be witty, however, and his collaboration with Legrand on *Une Femme est une Femme* (A Woman Is a Woman, 1961), which at Legrand's suggestion became a tongue-in-cheek parody of the Hollywood musical, allowed the composer to range across a wide range of styles, including lush orchestral romanticism, neoclassicism, big-band jazz, a Stravinsky-like modernism and eccentric circus tunes. Much of the film's humour comes from the deliberate mismatch between Legrand's elaborate, eclectic and hyperbolic score and the mundanity of the often drab images of everyday Parisian life it accompanies.

For his far more austere film about a prostitute, *Vivre sa Vie* (My Life to Live, 1962), Godard presented the narrative as 12 self-contained tableaux, and accordingly asked Legrand to compose a theme and eleven variations so that the musical and dramatic structures would directly match. With typical unpredictability, however, the maverick director jettisoned almost all of Legrand's carefully crafted composition so he could litter the film with a single disjointed fragment from the main theme, again introduced in the soundtrack at seemingly random moments – and never

allowed to cadence. Much to his credit, Legrand thought the idea was brilliant.

For Agnès Varda's *Cléo de 5 à 7* (Cleo from 5 to 7, 1962), Legrand not only provided the music – he also appeared in the film, playing the part of the title

'The Windmills of Your Mind' finally won Legrand his first Academy Award

character's pianist and song-composer. The film is a real-time depiction of the anxieties experienced by Cléo while she awaits the result of a biopsy, which may well bring with it a cancer diagnosis. And for Varda's husband, director Jacques Demy, Legrand wrote his boldest film score to date. This was *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* (The Umbrellas of Cherbourg, 1964), in which every line of dialogue is sung, with even the most mundane of them delivered in recitative. As with *Une Femme est une Femme*, the basic concept is that the extravagant score – and, in this instance, the brightly coloured costumes which pay overt tribute to the saturated Technicolor hues of the Hollywood musical – clash with the rainy contemporary settings and quotidian

conversations. In the absence of investors prepared to risk their money on such a novel venture, Legrand had to foot the bill for the recording of his 90-minute score. The film contains several fine songs, including 'I Will Wait for You' and 'Watch What Happens', the latter becoming one of his most popular jazz standards.

Legrand's music for *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* received two Oscar nominations (for Best Original Score and Best Song), with the movie itself being nominated for Best Foreign Language Film, and Demy decided to capitalise on Hollywood's interest in their work by casting Gene Kelly in a more conventional song-and-dance musical, *Les Demoiselles de Rochefort* (The Young Girls of Rochefort, 1967), again with Oscar-nominated music by Legrand. Soon afterwards, the composer went to Hollywood, where Henry Mancini secured for him the opportunity to compose the music for Norman Jewison's stylish thriller *The Thomas Crown Affair* (1968). Legrand's score again received two Oscar nominations, and the film's hugely successful song 'The Windmills of Your Mind' finally won him his first Academy Award. Sung on the soundtrack during a memorable sequence in which the title character flies his glider, and for which the original intention was to use The Beatles' recent 'Strawberry Fields

Picture perfect: (left) Michel Legrand with director Agnès Varda and actress Corinne Marchand at the release of *Cléo de 5 à 7*, 1962; (far left) Steve McQueen and Faye Dunaway on the set of *The Thomas Crown Affair*, 1968; (below left) his father Raymond Legrand, a composer and bandleader

Forever', Legrand's song is a good example of the 'interpolated' pop songs common in Hollywood movies during the 1960s – a strategy which was controversial at the time, since their often gratuitous inclusion seemed like a transparent ploy to win a nomination for the Oscar for Best Song. 'Windmills' was sung on the soundtrack by Noel Harrison, whose recording of it reached No. 8 in the UK singles chart.

Legrand won further Oscars for his contributions to *Summer of '42* (1971) and *Yentl* (1983), and also scored the Bond film *Never Say Never Again* (1983). But he was careful not to succumb entirely to the lure of Hollywood, where he routinely orchestrated all his scores himself rather than risk what he called the 'terrible feeling of uniformity' from which he felt US film music suffered on account of its skilful but essentially formulaic instrumentations. After only several months living in Los Angeles, he felt like he was dying 'a slow death... you can see your personality gradually shrinking'. He therefore also continued to work in Europe – in part as a result of the urgings of Edith Piaf, who was concerned that too much exposure to Hollywood would diminish his talents. In all, he composed well over 200 scores for film and TV on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as pursuing a parallel career as a recording artist in many styles and genres.

'The great advantage of writing for the cinema,' Legrand commented in his 2005 interview, 'is that I can achieve a synthesis of my different musical cultures, and express myself in any style possible with no limits.' His response to those directors who dared to disagree with his musical outlook, and even to reject his music from their films altogether, was: 'It doesn't bother me: at least it proves you're alive.' Alan and Marilyn Bergman, the lyricists of 'The Windmills of Your Mind', thought of him as 'an adventurer, always researching new musical worlds to conquer'. In a vivid image which paid apt tribute to the extraordinary eclecticism the composer demonstrated throughout his career, they described him as 'a one man "cirque du soleil". He tumbles, he juggles, he defies musical gravity. And, like the best of them, he works without a net'. 🎪

MICHEL LEGRAND *Life & Times*



1932

LIFE: Michel Legrand is born in Paris on 24 February. His father, Raymond, is a composer and conductor and his mother Marcelle is the sister of the leading conductor Jacques Hélian.

TIMES: French president Paul Doumer is shot dead by **Paul Gorguloff**, a Russian emigré, at a bookfair in Paris. Gorguloff is tried and executed by guillotine.

1954

LIFE: Featuring classics such as 'Paris in the Spring', 'Autumn Leaves' and 'La Vie en Rose', *I Love Paris*, the debut album by Michel Legrand and his



Orchestra, proves an instant hit.

TIMES:

As France suffers a

decisive defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu in the First Indochina War, the Geneva Conference partitions Vietnam into North Vietnam and South Vietnam.



1964

LIFE: He composes the score for director Jacques Demy's *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* which, featuring a cast including Catherine Deneuve as Geneviève, has an entirely sung dialogue.

TIMES: Following an epic

tussle with Raymond Poulidor, French cyclist Jacques Anquetil rides to victory in the Tour de France, becoming the first person to win the event five times.

2002

LIFE: He makes his Broadway debut when his musical *Le Passe Muraille* opens in New York under the title *Amour*. Though the reviews are mixed, *Amour* is nominated for four Tony Awards.

TIMES: France, the defending champions, are knocked out of the FIFA World Cup at the opening group stage, failing to score a single goal in defeats to Senegal and Denmark and a draw with Uruguay.

1983

LIFE: He wins the Academy Award for Best Adaptation Score for *Yentl*, starring Barbra Streisand. It is his third Oscar, following awards for *Summer of '42* and 'The Windmills of Your Mind'.

TIMES: Peugeot launches its 205 model, aiming to become a contender in the supermini market, which also includes the likes of the recently launched Volkswagen Polo.



2019

LIFE: He dies aged 86 in hospital in Paris, following treatment for a pulmonary infection. At the time of his death on 26 January, he still has a diary full of future engagements.

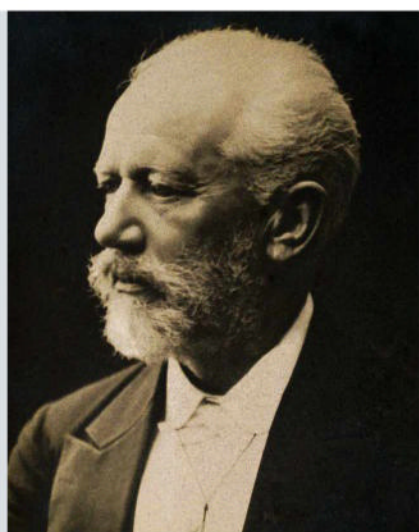
TIMES: French inventor and pilot **Franky Zapata** flies over the English Channel on his Flyboard Air, a jetpack-cum-hoverboard that is powered by gas turbines.



Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky

The Tempest

Jeremy Pound is storm-tossed and then enchanted as he seeks out the best versions of the Russian's Shakespeare-inspired fantasy-overture



The composer

Though he at no point led an entirely carefree life, the summer of 1873, during which he wrote *The Tempest*, saw the 33-year-old Tchaikovsky in a comparatively good place. Graduation in 1865 had been followed by being appointed professor of music at the new Moscow Conservatory, which he combined with employment as a (surprisingly waspish) music critic. His First and Second Symphonies had both enjoyed their premieres and the composer Balakirev was proving a strong supporter. Ballets, operas and four further symphonies – plus an increasingly tumultuous personal life – all lay in the future.

The work

Had Tchaikovsky had his way, his *The Tempest* might not actually have had a tempest in it at all. As he first pondered his Shakespearean fantasy-overture in early 1873, the Russian composer considered that by placing the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand at the very heart of his work, he might be able to dispense entirely with the storm that gave the original play its name. And if this was the case, he ventured in a letter to Vladimir Stasov, the influential scholar and critic who had suggested the piece, he also had another idea: 'Could I perhaps call the overture *Miranda*?'.

the new fantasy-overture – or 'symphonic fantasia' – in just eleven days, and in December of that same year the premiere took place in a performance at the Russian Musical Society under Nikolai Rubinstein.

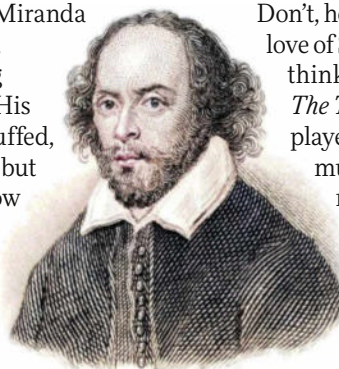
Few composers were better placed to write an overture based on Shakespeare. Enthusiasm for The Bard had flourished in Russia since the 1840s and Tchaikovsky himself was a major fan, taking volumes of the plays with him when travelling and attending performances whenever he could, both in Russia and abroad. When, in the late-1860s, his fellow composer Balakirev suggested writing an

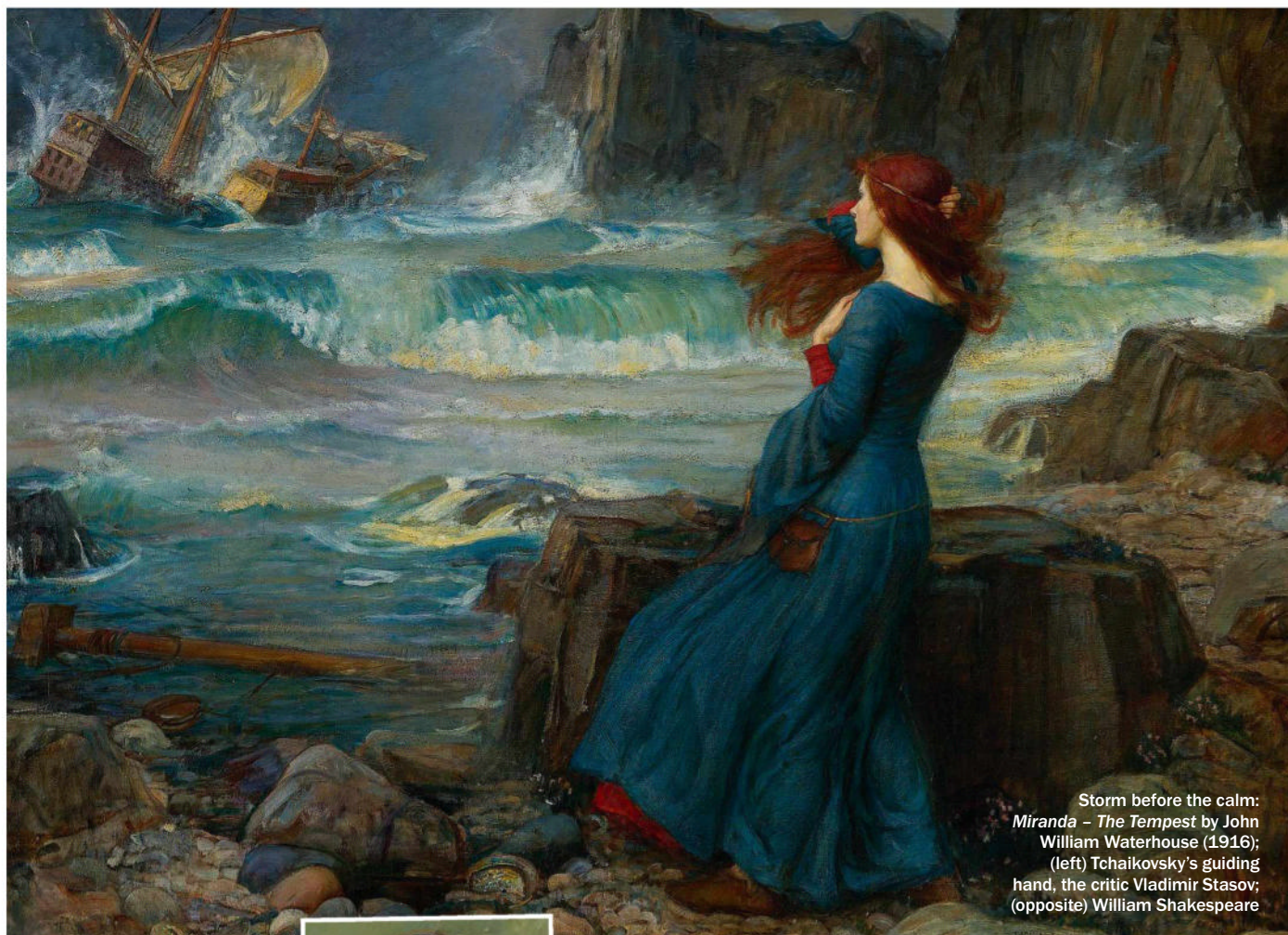
Tchaikovsky was a major Shakespeare fan, taking the plays with him when travelling

'Of course there must be a tempest. Without it the overture wouldn't be an overture, and the whole programme would be quite different,' came the prompt reply from Stasov, who himself had given Tchaikovsky a description of how he envisaged how such a work should take shape, beginning and ending with the sea and with significant themes and characters – Miranda and Ferdinand, Prospero, Ariel and Caliban – being portrayed along the way. His suggested alternative rebuffed, Tchaikovsky did not sulk but instead proceeded to follow Stasov's programme with gusto. During a summer break at a friend's estate in Ussovo, he composed

orchestral work based on *Romeo and Juliet*, Tchaikovsky gladly took up the idea – and, just as he would do with Stasov and *The Tempest*, followed Balakirev's proposed structure for the work to the letter. By 1876, he was mentioning a third Shakespeare-inspired overture, *Hamlet*, to his brother Modest, though this one would take several years to come to fruition.

Don't, however, let Tchaikovsky's love of Shakespeare lead you into thinking that when you listen to *The Tempest* you'll hear the plot played out episode by episode in music. That was never Stasov's, nor Tchaikovsky's, intention. What you can clearly pick out are the melodic themes set out by Stasov, which are neatly summarised by





Storm before the calm:
Miranda - The Tempest by John
 William Waterhouse (1916);
 (left) Tchaikovsky's guiding
 hand, the critic Vladimir Stasov;
 (opposite) William Shakespeare

Tchaikovsky's own words at the top of the score: 'The Sea. The magician Prospero commands his spirit Ariel to create a storm, of which a victim is the fortunate Ferdinand. The enchanted island. The first timid stirrings of love between Ferdinand and Miranda. Ariel. Caliban. The lovers are overwhelmed by their passion. Prospero renounces his magical powers and leaves the island. The Sea.'

With its shimmering strings and haunting, distant calls in the brass and woodwind, the vastness of the sea conjured up at the opening of *The Tempest* displays Tchaikovsky at his most spellbinding as an orchestral scene painter – and 'spellbinding' is the operative word, as we are, at the same time, being lured into the enchanted world of Prospero the magician. And while Tchaikovsky might not have initially wanted the storm that



follows, he certainly didn't hold back when unleashing it, including thundering bass drum and much besides.

Ariel, the spirit, is subsequently represented in suitably sprightly fashion by the upper strings and woodwind, the monstrous Caliban by a galumphing tune in the cellos and basses.

But as for Tchaikovsky's sumptuous love theme, Shakespeare aficionados may have to allow a little leeway – this romance belongs more to the world of *Romeo and Juliet* than Ferdinand and Miranda, the latter of whom is more wide-eyed and innocent – and feistier too – in the play than the composer's sensuous representation would have us believe. Still, it gives him the chance to treat us to one of his most gloriously gorgeous melodies, exquisitely orchestrated.

Stasov only got to hear *The Tempest* nearly a year after its premiere, at which

point he wrote to Tchaikovsky that 'The storm itself is of course trite and unoriginal, Prospero very ordinary, and near the end there is a very banal cadence straight out of some awful Italian opera finale.' Ouch. No wonder Russian composers in the 19th century had to develop thick skins.

But then comes the praise: 'All the rest is wonder piled upon wonder! ... What languor, what passion! ... Rimsky-Korsakov and I both send you our very heartiest congratulations, and warmly shake you by the hand.' Enraptured by *The Tempest's* intoxicating soundworld and brilliantly depicted characterisation, orchestras, conductors and, above all, listeners have similarly found themselves wanting to figuratively shake the composer's hand ever since.

Turn the page to discover our recommended recordings of Tchaikovsky's The Tempest

Magical touch:
conductor Alpesh
Chauhan combines
mystery with power

Three other great recordings



Claudio Abbado (conductor)

Of the two fine recordings made by Abbado, one in the studio with the Chicago Symphony in 1984 and the other live with the Berlin Philharmonic ten years later, the former just wins the day. While Abbado might not achieve quite the same level of enchantment as Chauhan, no account is as viscerally thrilling as this, with the famous Chicago brass blasting one out of one's seat in the storm. One small caveat: is that Caliban we can hear grunting here and there? In fact, this is probably the great Italian maestro himself. (Sony G0100010395536)



Mikhail Pletnev (conductor)

At the head of a cohort of Russian/Soviet performances – which, from earlier years, also includes Nikolai Golovanov and the State Radio Committee Grand Symphony Orchestra (1948) and Evgeny Svetlanov and the State Symphony Orchestra Of The USSR (1971) – comes this well-rounded 1993 recording from Pletnev and his own Russian National Orchestra. Pletnev certainly doesn't hang about in this energetic performance, but there is plenty of passion too, plus a near-perfect orchestral balance throughout. (Deutsche Grammophon 439 8912)

A colourful Shakespearean account

The best
recording



Alpesh Chauhan (conductor)

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra
Chandos CHSA5300

Tchaikovsky later became disenchanted with *The Tempest*, describing it as 'too long, episodic and unbalanced'. Nonetheless, even given this verdict he might have been a little disappointed by how few of the most famous conductors have recorded it over the years, especially in comparison to the vast stacks of high-profile recordings enjoyed by, say, his ultra-popular *1812 Overture*, a work he said was composed 'without warmth and without love'.

There are one or two big names in there, of course. These include Arturo

Toscanini, whose 1944 account with the NBC Symphony Orchestra comes with both fluffy recorded sound and fluffed horns; and, several decades later, came not one but two versions from Toscanini's fellow Italian Claudio Abbado (see above). Tchaikovsky has also been served well

The mystery and awe as we look out to sea at the beginning is very special

here by his fellow Russians, both through the Soviet era and in more recent times.

The composer might have deemed his work 'episodic', but the very best performances don't make it feel that way, instead enthralling the listener as the scenery shifts vividly from one moment to the next within those magical seascapes at the beginning and end. What we are looking for here is a light and airy Ariel, a menacing (but, ideally, not lumbering)

Caliban, a confident, commanding Prospero and, above all, a Miranda and Ferdinand who are given room to revel in the joys of young romance – for all that he was set back on course by Stasov with regards to including the all-important storm, Tchaikovsky evidently still made the love birds his top priority.

No-one does all the above more adeptly than conductor Alpesh Chauhan who, in his 2022 recording with the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, achieves the important balance of being driven by a sense of forward momentum while still allowing the key moments to bloom.



Gustavo Dudamel (conductor)

Coming in at three minutes longer than Pletnev's is this 2010 recording from the

Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela under Gustavo Dudamel, who was still in his twenties at the time. As that difference in timing suggests, there are moments here when things tend to linger a little longer than one might like and Dudamel's sea doesn't shimmer quite as magically as Chauhan's, but a thrillingly hair-raising storm and a luxuriously indulgent love theme – the recording was made, aptly, on Valentine's Day itself – make the Venezuelans' visit to Prospero's enchanted island a worthwhile one. (Deutsche Grammophon 477 9355)

And one to avoid...



Poor old Caliban.

Already unloved and derided, in this 1943 recording by the NBC Symphony Orchestra under Leopold

Stokowski, Prospero's subhuman slave gets cut out of the picture almost entirely – if the short running time (14 minutes) doesn't already tell you that a significant cut has been made in the recording, the none-too-subtle edit certainly will. Throughout, the crackly sound makes this hard work, though the thrill of Stokowski's furiously whipped-up storm does make one wonder what it must have been like to hear it live.

The mystery and awe achieved by the BBC Scottish's superbly featherlight upper strings as we look out to sea at the beginning is particularly special – few recordings achieve such a feeling of awe and mystery – while the storm that follows packs an almighty punch.

But what above all sets this *Tempest* apart is how everything is captured in such superb sound. This is the sort of richly detailed yet resonant recording that has you taking a peak at the bank balance and audio reviews pages and thinking that, maybe, an equipment upgrade might indeed be a nice investment.

BEN EALOVEGA, LARS SVENKERUD, GETTY



Storm gatherers: Edward Gardner and the Bergen Philharmonic have recorded Nordheim's *The Tempest*; (below) composer Thomas Adès

Continue the journey...

We suggest further works to explore after Tchaikovsky's *The Tempest*

Don't get blown in the wrong direction: **Tchaikovsky's** *The Tempest* is not the same as his *The Storm*. Based on a play by Alexander Ostrovsky, the latter is an overture from several years earlier, and while Tchaikovsky himself soon disowned it, his portrayal of illicit passion and subsequent torment is a powerful one. Be warned, however: the early orchestral thunder crashes may scare the life out of you if you are caught unawares. (LSO/Gennadi Rozhdestvensky LSO Live LSO 1022)

Caliban's 'the isle is full of noises' quote is captured vividly by Arne Nordheim

Now back to Shakespeare. In 1924, **Sibelius** composed incidental music for *The Tempest*, which he later distilled into an overture plus two orchestral suites. The overture is devoted almost entirely to a graphic depiction of a storm building before we are introduced to the cast over the movements that follow: Prospero has a Baroque-like majesty; Caliban enters to an oriental-style flourish; and, in contrast to Tchaikovsky's ardently passionate character, Sibelius's Miranda comes across as reflective and restrained. (Lahti SO/Okko Kamu BIS BISSACD1945)

Sibelius's *The Tempest* came towards the end of his career. In contrast, **Arthur**

Sullivan's incidental music for the same play brought the 19-year-old composer to widespread attention in 1861. Usually heard today in a seven-movement suite, the music begins in dark, foreboding fashion but contains much of the lighter, airier touch that would bring Sullivan such notable success in the opera house in years to come. (BBC Philharmonic/Richard Hickox Chandos CHAN 9859)

The essence of Caliban's quote that 'the isle is full of noises' is captured particularly vividly by **Arne Nordheim** in his

1979 ballet *The Tempest*. Complete with recorded sounds and wordless soprano, the Norwegian's dramatic, atmospheric score can be heard in compact form as an eight-movement suite. (Bergen Philharmonic/Edward Gardner Lawo LWC1250)

Five Spells from The Tempest is the name given by **Thomas Adès** to the

orchestral suite distilled from his hugely acclaimed opera, premiered in 2004. Beginning with the storm, those five 'spells' reference the play's main characters, with the romance between Miranda and Ferdinand depicted in sumptuous fashion at its heart. (London Philharmonic/Thomas Adès LPO LPO-0131)



Reviews

Recordings and books rated by expert critics

Welcome



This is my first issue as Reviews Editor, and what better way to begin? Isabelle Faust takes centre stage in our Recording of the Month with a stunning

collection of Bach's lesser-known violin works. Elsewhere, the inimitable Abel Selaocoe's debut cello concerto and most exploratory release yet, *Four Spirits*, is a magnificent work weaving the artist's biography and reflections on township life and community together through varying cello techniques, improvisation and lyrics in Southern Sotho and Zulu languages. Other standouts include *The Idiot*, Weinberg's epic opera based on Dostoyevsky's novel, a magical ode to Arvo Pärt from Vox Clamantis and, for those who love their musicals, the first ever studio recording of Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* in its entirety! *Miranda Bardsley* *Reviews editor*

This month's critics

John Allison, Nicholas Anderson, Terry Blain, Garry Booth, Kate Bolton-Porciatti, Geoff Brown, Michael Church, Christopher Cook, Martin Cotton, Christopher Dingle, Misha Donat, Jessica Duchén, Rebecca Franks, George Hall, Katy Hamilton, Malcolm Hayes, Claire Jackson, Michael Jameson, Stephen Johnson, John-Pierre Joyce, Nicholas Kenyon, Ashutosh Khandekar, Erik Levi, Jon Lusk, Andrew McGregor, Freya Parr, Ingrid Pearson, Jeremy Pound, Steph Power, Anthony Pryer, Paul Riley, Suzanne Rolt, Jan Smaczny, Charlotte Smith, Jo Talbot, Anne Templer, Sarah Urwin Jones, Kate Wakeling, Alexandra Wilson, Sean Wilson

KEY TO STAR RATINGS

★★★★★ Outstanding
★★★★ Excellent
★★★ Good
★★ Disappointing
★ Poor

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

A stunning and scholarly performance

Jan Smaczny is enthralled by Isabelle Faust's unique approach to the demanding material of Bach's little-known violin works



JS Bach

Sonatas for Violin and Continuo

Isabelle Faust (violin);
Kristin von der Goltz (cello);
Kristian Bezuidenhout
(harpsichord)
Harmonia Mundi HMM902698
60:44 mins

Isabelle Faust is an artist of formidable range. Twenty years ago, her recording of Dvořák's Violin Concerto with Jiří Bělohlávek and the Prague Philharmonia in many ways redefined views of this familiar work, adopting a fresh, chamber-like approach which was faithful to the text without losing an ounce of spontaneity.

This ability to bring something new to her interpretations while remaining scrupulous in phrasing, ornamentation and articulation illuminates the

performances on this new recording of Bach violin music.

The composer's sonatas for accompanied violin are well known and justly celebrated. The present collection looks beyond this familiar repertoire in drawing together the surprising range of Bach's independent works for solo violin and continuo. Luckily, the provenance of these items, sometimes quite obscure, is explained in exemplary fashion in the accompanying notes.

While none of these works – with the exception of an enjoyable and very effective arrangement of one of Bach's finest chamber works, the G minor Sonata originally for viola da gamba with continuo – are quite on the exalted level of the E major and C minor accompanied Sonatas, this collection is full of treasures.

Isabelle Faust is a splendid guide, not just thoughtful, but also on occasion provocative. A clear understanding of performance practice where articulation and vibrato are concerned make for arresting listening at every stage. Her



Star players:
(l-r) Isabelle Faust,
Kristian Bezuidenhout
and Kristin von der Goltz

Performer's notes **Isabelle Faust**



What was the inspiration behind putting together a programme of Bach's rarer violin works?

After recording the Bach Violin Concertos, the Sonatas and Partitas for Solo Violin and the Sonatas with Harpsichord, it seemed logical to continue the journey with these sonatas, adding the cello to this intimate musical constellation. Looking for pieces for this programme, we decided to make our version of the fantastic Gamba Sonata in G minor; it is such a masterful piece, we felt it could work very well on the violin. The Sonata in C minor has the most spectacular first movement with so much depth, so we could not leave that out either, even if it isn't really attributed to Johann Sebastian anymore. The Fugue was a real challenge, and this too we needed to add to the programme.

What was it like working on the record with Kristin von der Goltz and Kristian Bezuidenhout?

It was so enriching and a wonderful continuation of our Bach journey. I am so lucky to be surrounded by the most outstanding colleagues. Kristian has an immense knowledge of this repertoire and did not stop looking for answers to all the questions appearing during our preparation period; he is a source of knowledge, passion and inspiration. Together with Kristin, we researched and developed the programme over a long period, even longer than we'd planned as we had to postpone several times because of logistical and Covid-related reasons. I am very happy that we had more time to research and reflect, as this music needs to live with the musician and be integrated in the mind and heart for it to show understanding and depth.

mix of imagination and control in the improvisatory first movement of the E minor Sonata, possibly written for the violin virtuoso Georg Pisendel during Bach's time as court musician to the Duke of Weimar in the first two decades of the 18th century, exemplifies this approach with the musical texture conjured almost magically from a single note.

The Fugue in G minor may also have been intended for Pisendel; it's an extraordinary work full of technical challenges with an almost concerto-like feel, including cadenzas. Faust deals magnificently with its fearsome demands in a performance which balances flawless handling of the counterpoint with passionate engagement throughout.

While consistently compelling, Faust's playing is not always predictable; the opening *Adagio* of the C minor Sonata, for instance, is almost sultry in its intensity, in marked contrast to the exquisite,

Isabelle Faust is a splendid guide, not just thoughtful, but on occasion provocative

songlike quality that she brings to the cantilenas in the concluding *Affettuoso*.

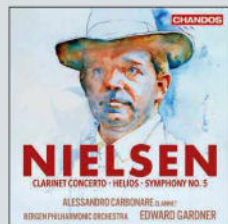
Her way with the faster movements is equally enjoyable. The brisk central movement of the C minor Sonata, for example, while beautifully phrased, has a captivatingly carefree quality.

There is also plenty of room for virtuosity: the *Presto* of the G major Sonata is seriously 'up tempo', but is full of nuance as well as maintaining a powerful sense of line. Kristin von der Goltz on cello and Kristian Bezuidenhout, playing a resonant modern copy of a harpsichord contemporary to Bach, make up a remarkable ensemble providing much more than mere accompaniment.

In each work, there is a clear sense of balance between their contribution and that of the soloist; their interaction with Faust in the arrangement of the G minor viola da gamba Sonata has the eloquence of an intimate conversation. Excellently recorded, this issue is captivating throughout.

★★★★★

ORCHESTRAL CHOICE



Nielsen

Helios; Symphony No. 5; Clarinet Concerto*

*Alessandro Carbonare (clarinet); Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra/Edward Gardner

Chandos CHSA5314 70:45 mins

This latest instalment of Edward Gardner's Nielsen cycle with the Bergen Philharmonic presents three works in a natural concert-like sequence:

overture, concerto, symphony. An immediate upside is that *Helios*, written much

earlier than the other two, is here able to sound like something more than a way of filling up a CD. Nielsen's depiction of the sun's dawn-to-dusk journey across the Greek sky features a faster central section flanked by the impressive horn-calls of the slow opening and close, with fine orchestral playing on display. The Clarinet Concerto is one of Nielsen's last statements, impelled by his strange way of deploying an insistent

His virtuosity extends to every corner of the exacting solo part

streak of quirkiness to subvert the music's underlying seriousness. Alessandro Carbonare's virtuosity searches out every corner of the exacting solo part, while Gardner's accompaniments are vivid and alert.

Then comes the Fifth Symphony, in an interpretation brilliantly in line with the work's reputation as a 20th-century masterpiece. The first movement's striking design – a flowing opening section answered by a culminating slower one – can often sound like two halves stitched

together. Gardner's choice of tempo for the second section is closer to *andante* than to Nielsen's indicated *Adagio*;

but the result is that the structure hangs together superbly, building with thrilling momentum to the movement's embattled climax, as a ferocious snare-drum cadenza does everything it can to destroy the orchestral peroration surging around it. Gardner's pacing of the second and final movements, too, is unerring; and the Bergen strings deliver their tricky high-speed passagework with state-of-the-art accuracy. ★★★★★

Thrilling Nielsen from start to finish

Malcolm Hayes finds perfect pacing in the latest instalment of Gardner's cycle

**Late statement:
Alessandro Carbonare
excels in Nielsen's
Clarinet Concerto**



You can access thousands of reviews from our extensive archive on the BBC Music Magazine website at www.classical-music.com

Beethoven

Symphony No. 9

Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine; Chœur de l'Opéra National de Bordeaux; Chœur d'Angers Nantes Opéra/ Joseph Swensen

Alpha Classics ALPHA1163 70:43 mins



Hans Keller once compared the opening of Beethoven's last symphony from Toscanini – who sculpted the sextuplets in cellos and violas with metronomic exactitude – and Furtwängler – who made it sound imprecise, primordial, yet inescapably gripping – as 'the beginning before the beginning'.

Throughout this new recording, Joseph Swensen emulates Toscanini's textual clarity, but the principal drawback with this traversal is its unyielding rhythmic grip. There's none of Furtwängler's portentous, cosmos-shifting ambiguity here; instead, Swensen obtains urgently responsive playing throughout the vast opening movement, whilst offering little contemplative reprieve.

Beethoven's intentionally neurotic *scherzo*, too, seems hard-driven, its restless tenacity all too palpable in the trio sections, where effective contrasts might have afforded a more satisfying result.

But it is in the great *Adagio* at the heart of this work that Swensen

is heard at his considerable best, coaxing glowing sonorities from the strings and finally relaxing enough to provide wind players, particularly clarinets, bassoons and horns, with space for individual expressivity.

The choral finale is helpfully banded in two sections on this recording, separating what Wagner called the *Schreckensfanfare* ('Fanfare of Terror') preceding the recitative passage for cellos and basses from the tenor soloist's entry at 'O Freunde, nicht diese Töne!' Despite Swensen's awkwardly mannered treatment of the tricky recitative section, the remainder goes well enough, with impressive contributions from the vocal soloists and both choruses. To conclude,

this probably isn't a Ninth you'd choose to live with, but Swensen's roller-coaster ride often excites, nonetheless. *Michael Jameson* ★★★★★

Chausson

Symphony in B flat major; Viviane; plus vocal works etc

Lauranne Oliva (soprano), Marie-Claude Chappuis (mezzo-soprano), David Delacroix (cello); Sinfonieorchester Basel/Ivor Bolton
Prospero PROSP0119 69:53 mins



This exquisitely presented and played exploration of Chausson's music marks the end

of Ivor Bolton's nine-year tenure at the helm of the Sinfonieorchester Basel. Built around the Symphony in B flat, it features some enchanting rarities spanning Chausson's all-too-brief career, from the Wagnerian orchestral poem *Viviane* of 1882 to the elegiac *Pièce* of 1897. A hidden gem for cellists in its usual version with piano, David Delacroix's touching interpretation of the latter benefits from the idiomatic orchestration by the work's dedicatee, Jacques Gaillard.

Acting as a precursor to his opera on King Arthur, *Viviane* is a miniature masterpiece that points the way to impressionism as much as it draws on *Parsifal* in its ethereal depiction of Merlin's enrapture with his beloved. It sounds ravishing in this Basel performance, as does the three-movement Symphony, which is adroitly paced by Bolton with plenty of air and mystery in the moodier moments, yet tearing furiously into the final *Animé*.

Soprano Lauranne Oliva and mezzo Marie-Claude Chappuis join the orchestra for the threefold icing on the cake. They combine sublimely for the delectable 'La nuit' from 2 Duos, which sounds like a lost companion for the 'Flower Duet' from Delibes's *Lakmé*. Oliva is then commanding, yet tear inducing in a heart-breaking excerpt from the lyric drama *Helène*, while Chappuis's creamy voice mesmerises in the existential musing of 'Les morts' from *Chansons de Miarka*. Strongly recommended. **Christopher Dingle ★★★★★**

Anna Clyne

Abstractions; Within Her Arms, Restless Oceans; Color Field
Baltimore Symphony Orchestra/
Marin Alsop
Naxos 8574620 52:46 mins



Rushing strings and tumbling melodies cascade through *Auguries*, conjuring birds that flock to fly, while in *Seascape*, flute and vibraphone ebb and flow to recreate the gentle movement of a calm ocean. There is a strong visual element to much of Anna Clyne's work, with each movement of 2016's *Abstractions* linked to specific art works. The arpeggio motifs used in *River* (inspired by Ellsworth Kelly's photographic splicing) recall Schubert's babbling brook in *Die*

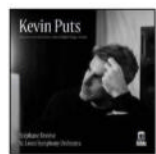
schöne Müllerin; *Marble Moon* is as economic as Sara VanDerBeek's corresponding geometric works. Marin Alsop's conducting currency is also colour, and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra skilfully render this premiere recording.

Color Field, also enjoying its first outing on record, similarly echoes Rothko's series of the same name, exploring synaesthesia. Thus, *Yellow* (tonal centre D) blinks slowly into existence as hazy sunshine and *Red* (in C) boasts majestic percussion and epic brass. In *Orange* (G) we get a nod to Clyne's electronic looping techniques, with suspended chords and over-laid repetitions used as sweeping brushstrokes; the BSO bask in this bold, occasionally brash, soundworld.

More melancholic is *Within Her Arms*, the elegiac string piece memorialising the composer's mother. This version is less resonant than the Sony recording by The Knights (2024) and suffers for having its edges polished. The short Stravinsky-imbued *Restless Oceans*, premiered by an all-women orchestra led by Alsop at the 2019 World Economic Forum, provides some welcome spiky contrast. **Claire Jackson ★★★★★**

Kevin Puts

Concerto for Orchestra; Silent Night Elegy; Virelai
St Louis Symphony Orchestra/
Stéphane Denève
Delos DE3620 50:40 mins



Kevin Puts has indicated that the opening stretch of his Concerto for Orchestra represents his response to the mass shooting in 2022 at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. One would never have guessed that from the rest of the piece: music variously rhythmic, soft-hearted, fleet-footed and twinkling, conveyed with the brash sheen and technical slickness that comes so easily to American composers, especially if rigorously trained, like Puts, at the Eastman School of Music. Throughout the work, and the album, the St Louis Symphony Orchestra and its music director Stéphane Denève play with assurance and verve. Denève's sensitivity to instrumental colours is especially apparent.

Silent Night Elegy, a one-movement creation conjured out of



Existential musings: mezzo Marie-Claude Chappuis is sublime in Chausson works

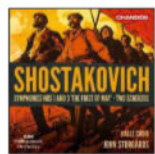
Puts's Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Silent Night* (2011), offers music of deeper import, befitting an opera set over Christmas 1914 during World War One, when ceasefires among combatants spontaneously and briefly broke out along the Western Front. The violent chaos of war is clearly presented, but the work's emotional power rests more with its euphonious, calming stretches, a lone violin line soaring above.

This album of always approachable music ends with *Virelai*, commissioned as the opening flourish in Denève's first official concert in 2019 as the St Louis orchestra's conductor. A melody by the 14th-century Machaut is whipped through repeated spins, increasing in force as it goes, just like Ravel's *Boléro*. Ravel's piece, however, lasts an average 15 minutes; *Virelai*, more wisely, occupies just under four. **Geoff Brown ★★★★★**

Shostakovich

Symphonies Nos 1 and 3; Two Scherzos

Hallé Choir; BBC Philharmonic/
John Storgårds
Chandos CHAN20398 75:06 mins



After their exploration of Shostakovich's last five symphonies, John Storgårds and the BBC Philharmonic now turn the clock back to the late 1920s and early 1930s with an intriguing and

excellently performed coupling of the First and Third Symphonies. Preceding these works, however, are the two orchestral Scherzos, Opp. 1 and 7 which are amongst Shostakovich's earliest orchestral compositions. Listening to them side by side, you get a good idea of the rapid strides that the teenage composer made during these formative years. Not surprisingly, Shostakovich's designated Op. 1 is the more derivative of the two works, owing a great deal to Rimsky-Korsakov and Glazunov, whereas Op. 7 already reveals a growing receptivity to contemporary composers such as Stravinsky.

Mind you, nothing in these works approaches the remarkable originality and maturity of the First Symphony. As in his previous Shostakovich recordings, Storgårds is extremely good at generating a cleanly articulated and pristine sound even in the work's most frenzied passages. I also like the way Storgårds deliberately puts the brakes on the tempo in the opening movement when the trudging march idea is heard for the first time. The *scherzo* is delivered with great panache by the BBC Philharmonic's superb wind and brass players, but the mock treble *fortissimo* piano chords near the end for some reason sound curiously tame. I wonder too whether Storgårds underplays the emotional intensity of the third movement *Lento*.

Although I have some qualms about Storgårds's interpretation of

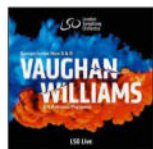
the First Symphony, his approach to the quirky Third Symphony, with its free-flowing succession of wildly contrasting musical ideas, works wonderfully well even in the banal choral finale which is projected with powerful conviction by the Hallé Choir. **Erik Levi ★★★★★**

Vaughan Williams

Symphonies Nos 5 & 9

LSO/Antonio Pappano

LSO Live LSO0900 74:43 mins



It's a long time since I was so captivated by a new recording of two such imposing

symphonies that I listened straight through in one go. Antonio Pappano never puts a foot wrong in either of these two works. OK, others have succeeded before him in Symphony No. 5, but for me this Ninth is a unique triumph. Pappano has always been impressive for the way he balances fine, minutely expressive phrasing with a compelling sense of the long line – not just big paragraphs, whole works. But something else that really tells in both these symphonies is his keen, lively sense of rhythm. I don't think the *Passacaglia* from No. 5 has ever danced as invitingly as here. But the way he makes the *Finale* of No. 9 – the trickiest movement in any Vaughan Williams symphony – feel like a more graceful, meditative retake on the *Scherzo*'s thuggish ballet was a revelation for me. The symphony isn't just full of insights; it's an insight in its entirety. The whole thing emerges as a powerful, sometimes fraught struggle between gravity and grace. Grace wins at the end, but it's up to the wire.

Others have emphasised the element of grace in the Fifth. The visionary element isn't lost in Pappano's version, but if this is a symphonic retake on Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, it's a more passionate pilgrimage than most others, and possibly better for that. It's certainly convincing enough on its own terms. The serenity at the end isn't a given; it has to be worked for, and there's something specially touching about the *diminuendo* at the end, before the final cadence has resolved. Humility is the word that comes to mind. Beautiful recordings. I can't recommend this highly enough. **Stephen Johnson ★★★★★**

American Mirror

Works by Quenton Blache, Andrea Casarrubios, Curtis Stewart et al

Sphinx Virtuosi

DG 486 7758 (digital) 69:44 mins



Most of the composers here were youngsters in 1997 – and Quenton Blache (b.2001) not yet

born – when Aaron P Dworkin launched his first Sphinx project, a young string players' competition. Addressing the systemic lack of access to classical music within Black and Latino communities, Dworkin's vision has since globally exploded from its Detroit base through the wider Sphinx Organisation, which continues to work 'toward a future in which our art form reflects our greater society'.

American Mirror reflects that journey and society through six exuberant works, richly rendered by the Sphinx Virtuosi string orchestra, variously featuring percussionist Josh Jones – and with a seventh commissioned for violin duo Tai Murray and Njioma Grevious.

It's fitting that Blache opens the album: *Habari Gani* is titled for a Swahili greeting and joyfully sets the mood. Equally – poignantly – fitting is that the album is closed by the much-missed Coleridge-Taylor Perkinson (1932-2004), whose eloquent and noble, wittily jazzy Sinfonietta No. 2, 'Generations' embraces not only his own family relations but, in this context, a far wider network.

Between the two pieces, Derrick Skye's (b.1982) eponymous *American Mirror* weaves those networks into a coming together of inheritances immigrant, refugee and enslaved. While Sphinx 24-25 Composer in Residence Curtis Stewart (b.1986) recalls brightly percussive street sounds in *Drill* – and the canonic inventiveness of Bach and Prokofiev in the dazzling *Invention #1: Double Down for Two Violins* – Juantio Becenti (b.1983) offers *Hané* (Story), inspired by Diné (Navajo) storytelling as a vehicle for identity and heritage. That latter word in Spanish forms the title of *Herencia* by Andrea Casarrubios, dedicated to the unique histories of the excellent Sphinx Virtuosi musicians.

Stéph Power ★★★★★

Les Siècles au Théâtre des Champs-Élysées

Works by Debussy, Dukas, Lalo and Roussel

Les Siècles/François-Xavier Roth

Harmonia Mundi HMM902736 61:14 mins



Recorded in January 2023 at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in a concert marking

20 years of François-Xavier Roth's period instrument orchestra Les Siècles, this gallic-themed disc looks forward as well as back. Presenting repertoire new to the ensemble by Roussel and Lalo interspersed with established favourites by Debussy and Dukas, the performances reflect the numerous strengths of Les Siècles, with mellow, yet incisive strings and richly characterful winds. These are tempered by mild frustration at the reluctance to explore some deeper stylistic traits, notably the portamento slides prevalent in earlier eras.

The First Suite from Lalo's ballet *Namouna* is especially welcome. A work that, remarkably, still lacks a complete recording, it is easy to understand what so excited the young Debussy about its vibrant melodies and orchestration. Roth brings a palpable sense of excited anticipation to the 'Prélude', ensuring the magisterial moments never become overbearing, while the 'Sérénade' and 'Parades de foire' bounce along with an enticing lightness of touch.

The Second Suite from Roussel's *Bacchus et Ariane* is similarly engrossing, a plaintive bassoon accompanying the viola's beautiful depiction of the sleeping Ariane, while her dance is languorously seductive and the 'Bacchanale' fizzles. Despite a whiff of impatience, the woodwind are utterly beguiling in Debussy's *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*, and the irresistible whirl of Dukas's *L'Apprenti Sorcier* closes the disc with a scintillating kaleidoscope of orchestral textures. **Christopher Dingle ★★★★★**

BRIEF NOTES

Elsa Barraine Symphonies Nos 1 & 2 etc

WDR Sinfonieorchester/Elena Schwarz CPO 555704-2 60.78 mins



This is an indispensable guide to Elsa Barraine, a 20th-century French composer whose music was performed at the BBC Proms for the first time this summer. Moral conviction fuel her (anti-war) neo-classical Symphony No. 2 of 1938 and anti-fascist symphonic poem *Pogromes*. The programme, played with conviction by the WDR Sinfonieorchester Köln under Elena Schwarz, also includes the ambitious First Symphony.

Rebecca Franks ★★★★★

Tania León Horizons; Raíces (Origins); Stride; Pasajes

LPO/Edward Gardner/Karina Canellakis et al LPO LPO135 55.46 mins



Celebrating Tania León's two-year composer-in-residence partnership with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, this live album features four large-scale orchestral commissions, variously inspired by León's multicultural heritage. Splashes of orchestral colour, with an emphasis on winds and brass, showcase Latin, jazz and Caribbean influences, to which the LPO responds with vibrant virtuosity. **Charlotte Smith ★★★★★**

Transatlantic Works by Adams, Arnold, Britten, Gershwin, Price et al

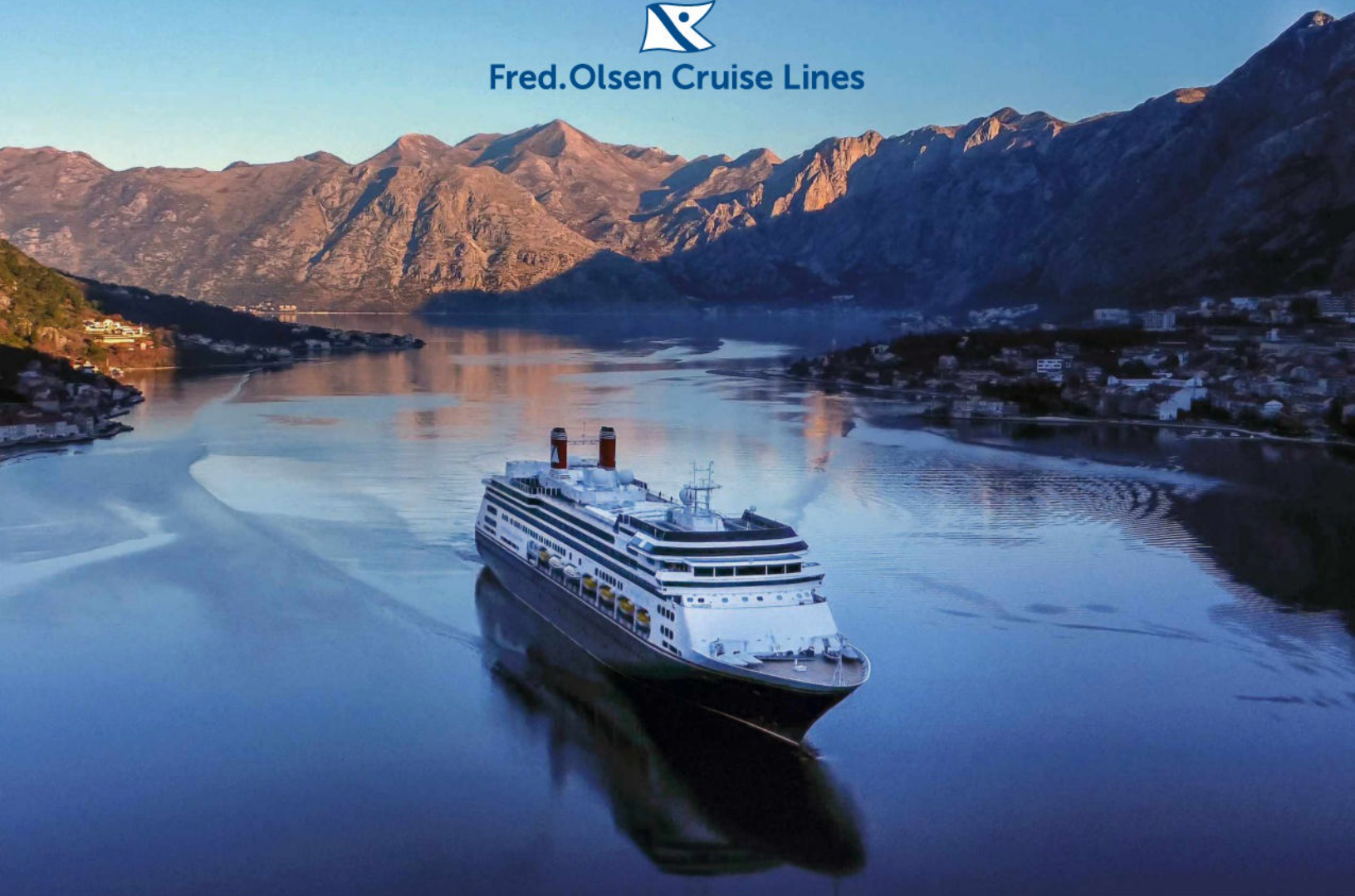
Onyx Brass/John Wilson Chandos CHAN20399 64.46 mins



Onyx Brass rack up a fair few airmiles as they criss-cross from Walton to Adams, Arnold to Gershwin etc in an engaging album whose variety of mood ranges from sombre Britten to Bernstein in party mode. There is some great skill from individual players on show here, too – check out, for instance, the high-octane tuba in Arnold's Brass Quintet No. 1. **Jeremy Pound ★★★★★**



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CONCERTO CHOICE



Abel Selaocoe

Four Spirits

Abel Selaocoe (cello); Aurora Orchestra

Warner Classics 2173277863 41:15 mins

Abel Selaocoe is a breathtakingly vibrant artist who has a poignant understanding of the umbilical cord between music, community and spirituality. In conveying this humane message, he offers exceptional cello virtuosity moulded in Western training, but enhancing those sound worlds with a unique singing style that turns the voice into an instrument, be it a growling grooving bass, or fluttering high notes. It's a quasi-scat style that at times recalls Ella Fitzgerald. Add to that his absorption of his intoxicating native Zulu language and folk materials, and you have this compelling journey.

In his first Cello Concerto, *Four Spirits*, each of the four movements looks at a different aspect of life –

A vibrant and humane message

Jo Talbot is impressed – and moved – by Abel Selaocoe's first Cello Concerto

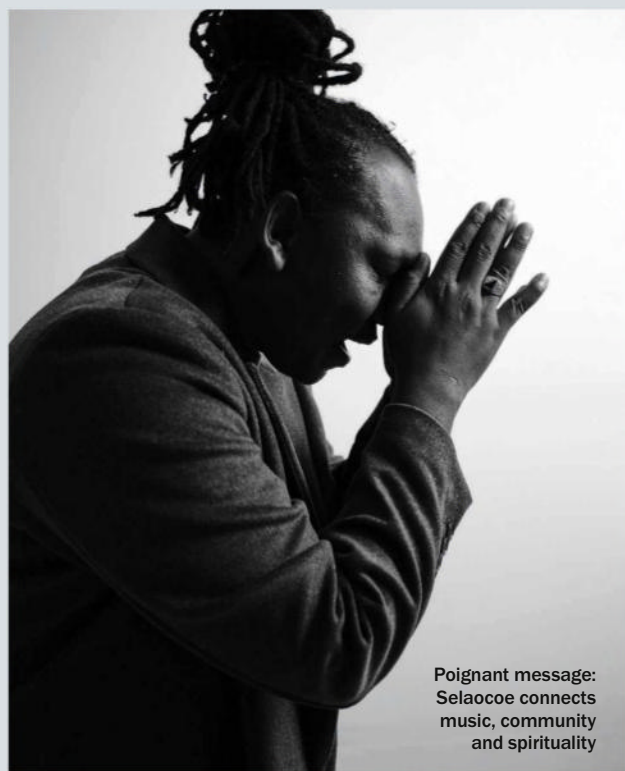
'MaSebego', a narrative reflecting on the traditional ancestral role of healing. 'Bana' – the second movement – is more whimsical, exploring the playful nature of children, the cello scampering along the high registers, teasing us with playful harmonic slides and skittish pizzicatos.

What is so striking is his unswerving mission; he believes in music's role to improve humanity. The third movement – 'Tshepo' – looks at the role of prayer. The

Selaocoe believes in music's role to improve humanity

opening cello idea reflects a Baroque inflection with fast string crossings, before the spiritual journey

takes us into other realms. The underlying percussion line is brilliantly expressed by Bernhard Schimpelsberger, with the Aurora Orchestra and Nicholas Collon adding a supremely executed partnering role. 'Simunye' – the final movement – celebrates the communal aspect of singing as the audience join in the cello's visionary narrative of the folk-inflected lines – inspiringly tender. ★★★★★



Poignant message: Selaocoe connects music, community and spirituality

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Kalevi Aho • Magnus Lindberg

Clarinet Concertos

Julian Bliss (clarinet); BBC Scottish SO/Taavi Oramo

Signum Classics SIGCD898 60:58 mins



Magnus Lindberg's concertos are unconventionally conventional: whether it's in his music for piano, trombone, or, as here, clarinet, the Finnish composer pushes the soloist into a virtuosic stratosphere. The 2002 Clarinet Concerto is now well established as a dazzling diamond in the repertoire rough, although few have

recorded it since dedicatee Kari Kriikku won *BBC Music Magazine's* Premiere Award in 2006. It's exciting, then, to hear it taken up by Julian Bliss, a clarinetist who thrives in this scampering sound world. Lindberg's language balances memorable melodic material with Gershwinian glissandi and piquant upper-octave phrases. The cadenza is Bliss's own; from its restrained opening to repeated ascents it is an extraordinary and engaging display – Mozart in modernity. The final fifth movement frolics with *Rhapsody in Blue* witticisms. (Lindberg lore reveals that's the concerto was written while composer and Kriikku were holidaying on separate islands in

the Gulf of Finland, with the work delivered by boat, page by page.)

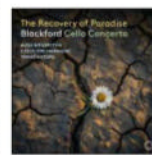
Lindberg compatriot Aho's concerto is an interesting coupling. While more introspective (BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra and conductor Taavi Oramo are beautifully restrained in the *Adagio*), it is equally dramatic, drawing on an extended palette to broaden the clarinet's sound. This is most effective in the *Misterioso*: where multiphonics creep into the score, the previously clean tonality cracks. In his introductory note, Bliss says that the Lindberg and Aho clarinet concertos are 'two of the greatest of the 21st century'. It's a bold claim, and one that is easy to endorse. *Claire Jackson* ★★★★★

Richard Blackford

Cello Concerto 'The Recovery of Paradise'

Alisa Weilerstein (cello); Czech Philharmonic/Tomáš Netopil

Pentatone PTC5187473 (digital EP) 30 mins



As we experience the fourth heatwave this year, and hear of Europe burning with wildfires, the theme of this concerto is entirely prescient: the wildfires of California. Entitled 'The Recovery of Paradise', the work traces a journey from disaster to the rebuilding of lives. The first movement – 'Devil Winds of Santa Ana' – graphically depicts

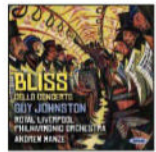
the raging fires, burning at 160 mph and destroying everything in their wake. A furiously demanding *moto perpetuo* semiquaver cello line is delivered with electric energy and virtuosity by Alisa Weilerstein. The chaotic whirlwind terror is perfectly evoked by Richard Blackford who deploys his film composer skills to depict this devastating emotional landscape. The central section quiets the pace of raging invention – the quiet of a town as yet unaware of the impending tragedy – before the tumultuous momentum stirs again. In the second movement, 'Cry The Scorched Earth', Weilerstein's style sings eloquently in the arpeggiated figures, which soar high into the cellistic skies, conveying a melodic sadness. Elements of mysticism colour the intricate orchestration, delivered expressively by the Czech Philharmonic under Tomáš Netopil. In contrast, the ensuing movement – 'Rhyme and Rhythm of the Rain' – sees their style transform, dialogues in the tricky syncopation crisp and incisive.

Weilerstein's autumnal tones eloquently sing a beautiful melody in 'The Recovery of Paradise', again soaring to the high registers as the landscape breathes recovery after rain. By turns tender and intensely burnished, the narrative gently subsides; new life springs forth. *Jo Talbot ★★★★★*

Bliss

Cello Concerto

Guy Johnston (cello); RLPO/
Andrew Manze
Onyx DONYX4269 (digital EP) 24:41 mins



Despite its distinguished pedigree – commissioned for Rostropovich, who described it as a splendid piece – this concerto has never become part of the British cello mainstream. Britten, who conducted the premiere at the 1970 Aldeburgh Festival, considered it to be a major work, asking Bliss to change the title to 'Concerto from the original Concertino'. A recording of that premiere shows how well Rostropovich's essentially muscular style suited the piece, and the jagged opening dotted rhythms are caught as energetically by Johnston. He may yield a little to the great Russian in tonal variety, but he imbues the various characters of the first movement with personality, and

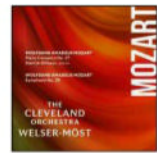
affection in the more lyrical second section. The substantial cadenza has the right improvisatory feel, and he's aided by a disciplined orchestral contribution and bright sound. There's some lovely wind playing at the opening of the slow movement, whose restless harmonies sometimes give an unsettled feel to the overall lilting pastore. Again, there's an attractive flexibility of rubato in the solo line, whose curlicues are shaped with rhythmic freedom and seamless legato.

The finale is more episodic and elusive, with changes of time-signature and mood, eventually returning to the theme which began the whole concerto. The orchestra is more dominant, although the soloist still has plenty to do, and Johnston certainly shines – a splendid performance of a splendid piece. *Martin Cotton ★★★★★*

Mozart

Piano Concerto No. 27*; Symphony No. 29

*Garrick Ohlsson (piano); Cleveland Orchestra/Franz Welser-Möst
Cleveland Orchestra TCO0015-D (digital) 52:30 mins



The Cleveland Orchestra is one of the world's most sophisticated ensembles and has released its own-label recordings since 2020. This one is mildly surprising since both pianist and conductor have been mainly active in repertory later than Mozart and brought clarity to both Mozart's last piano concerto and his finest middle-period symphony. The strings are sweet and impeccably phrased, shy of any accents that might disturb the flow of K595's opening *Allegro*'s ethereal progress. This underplays Mozart's wonderfully sharp-edged exchanges between piano and orchestra. Garrick Ohlsson cultivates a lovely singing, transparent sound which lacks only a rhythmic lift, especially in the skipping finale, which here emerges as wistfully restrained compared with, say, the gentle wit of Alfred Brendel.

The symphony is quite up to date in its brisk tempi and clean-edged phrasing. Welser-Möst's opening *Allegro moderato* takes 7:24 compared with James Levine's droopy 9:34 (with Vienna in 1986). The clearly antiphonal writing



New champion:
Julian Bliss thrives
in Magnus Lindberg

between first and second violins is not captured here, but that allows a witty viola echo at bars 38 and 40. The *Andante* admirably flows along, shorn of its second repeat, but manages to sound superficial. The final racing *Allegro con spirito* is fluent but doesn't unleash quite enough high spirits in the horns' whooping at the close.

This is an instructive disc in showing how mainstream Mozart performance has moved on during our generation but, given the competition, it will surely be chiefly of interest to Cleveland devotees. It's impossible to tell how many players are involved, since the entire orchestra is listed, including contrabassoon, bass trombone and euphonium! *Nicholas Kenyon ★★*

John Rutter

Reflections*; Elegy*; Cityscapes; Four Miniatures for Orchestra

*Steven Osborne (piano), Royal Philharmonic Orchestra/John Rutter
Decca 487 1478 71:24 mins



John Rutter will always be associated with choral music – the much-loved bulk of his output – and Christmas carols most of all. There's a sense it may, on the eve of his 80th birthday, irk him a little, for as he says in the self-deprecating booklet notes, he would really rather just be known as a 'composer'.

And so, by way of birthday celebration, a first recorded

collection of some of his orchestral works, including his piano concerto *Reflections* (1979), which hasn't been heard since its premiere.

The *Celebration Overture* (2023) opens with an orchestral peeling of bells – evocative, dare I say it, of a certain season – breezy and in the long tradition of British light music.

More weighty is *Reflections*, with pianist Steven Osborne on top form. Its evocative opening is quietly panoramic, before the eventual entrance of the piano in extended solo. Musical reflections abound, including a full-on ragtime in the final light-hearted movement, brilliantly thrown off by Osborne.

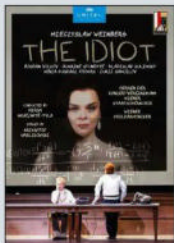
The *Four Miniatures for Orchestra* (2021) are perhaps less memorable, ending with a cheery orchestration of the folk tune 'Dance to your Daddy', which wouldn't be out of place scoring a cosy TV drama.

The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra do fine work with *Cityscapes*, one of Rutter's first non-choral commissions. It was written in the 1970s for the youth orchestra, the London Senior Orchestra, who must have had great fun with its grand filmic allusions. The first movement, 'Big Apple', is occasionally Gershwin-esque; 'Lost City', too, is ethereal and expertly shaped before a thrusting final movement.

The final work, *Elegy*, stands alone, darker than Rutter's 'usual realms' as he puts it, and fading hauntingly. A fascinating overview of the lesser-known Rutter. *Sarah Urwin Jones ★★★★★*

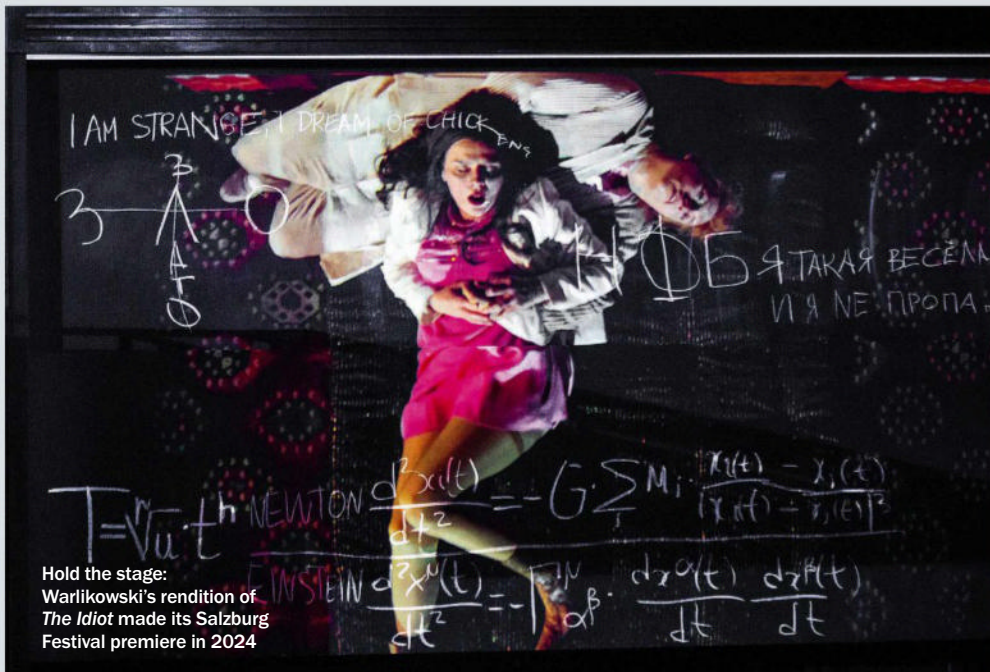
Opera & Stage

OPERA CHOICE



A captivating take on Weinberg's epic opera

The Vienna Philharmonic flourish in this brilliantly engaging contemporary production, notes **Erik Levi**



Hold the stage:
Warlikowski's rendition of
The Idiot made its Salzburg
Festival premiere in 2024

Weinberg

The Idiot

Bogdan Volkov, Aušrine Stundytė et al;
Konzertvereinigung Wiener Staatsopernchor, Wiener
Philharmoniker/Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla et al
Unitel 811408/811504 (DVD/Blu-ray) 196 mins

There's a good deal of evidence to suggest that

Mieczysław Weinberg's seventh and final opera *The Idiot*, an ambitious stage adaptation of Dostoyevsky's famous novel of the same name, is a profoundly moving testimony to the Polish-born Jewish composer's life in the Soviet Union. The parallels are drawn through Weinberg's identification with the opera's central figure of Prince Myshkin, whose sheer kindness and lack of guile leads the other characters in the opera to abuse his good nature and assume mistakenly that he lacks any intelligence.

Weinberg composed this huge work between 1986 and 1989, but with little expectation that it would ever reach the stage. In fact, the first performance took place in Mannheim in 2013, followed four years later by a staging in Moscow. The present DVD celebrates

its first unveiling at the Salzburg Festival in 2024 in an imaginative production by Krzysztof Warlikowski which, with resourceful use of video and flexible stage backdrops, brings the drama right up to date.

The opera's main protagonists, Myshkin (Bogdan Volkov), the flighty Nastasya (Aušrine Stundytė), the conniving Rogózhin (Vladislav Sulimsky) and Aglaya (Xenia Puskarz Thomas) deliver virtuoso performances. But the real stars are the Wiener Philharmoniker and Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla, who extract a formidable array of colours and textures from Weinberg's acerbic score.

Although I am extremely impressed with the DVD's visual quality, it's a pity that the booklet is less satisfactory in giving a far too compressed plot summary. In a work of this scale, such lack of detail is bound to leave most viewers confused at times as to what is actually happening on the stage. ★★★★★

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Weinberg composed this work with little expectation it would ever reach the stage

Gluck

Orphée et Eurydice (Paris Version)

Reinoud Van Mechelen, Ana Vieira Leite et al; Les Arts Florissants et al
Harmonia Mundi HAF8905401.02
128:21 mins (2CD)



After listening to this recording of Gluck's 1774 Paris reworking of his *Orpheus and Eurydice*-

themed opera, you might not – unlike Orpheus as he leaves the underworld – want to look back at the original 1762 Vienna version.

As the conductor Paul Agnew points out, *Orphée et Eurydice* was a new work, crafted to meet the tastes, traditions and opportunities that Gluck encountered during his time in the French capital. The Italian libretto was translated and adapted into the French dramatic style, the lead castrato part was changed to a haute-contre high tenor and the opera was lengthened by the inclusion of ballet sequences. New arias were also added and the orchestration was revised, notably with the addition of clarinets. The result: a varied and well-developed work that provided the model for future French Classical and Romantic operas.

Reinoud Van Mechelen brings vocal suppleness, expressivity and perfect diction to his fine account of Orpheus – a role originally assigned to the Paris Opéra's star, Joseph Le Gros. Ana Vieira Leite makes a powerful impact as a troubled Eurydice, while fellow soprano Julie Roset sparkles brightly as Cupid. The chorus of Les Arts Florissants are fully engaged participants in the drama, clearly differentiating their roles as mourners, Furies and Elysian spirits. The orchestra's playing and Agnew's direction are compelling and include a thrilling dance of the Furies and a tranquil ballet for the Blessed Spirits – essentially a flute concerto, written for Gluck's admiring Paris audience. John-Pierre Joyce ★★★★★

Mary Kouyoumdjian

Adoration

Miriam Khalil, Omar Najmi et al;
Silvana Quartet; The Choir of Trinity Wall Street/Alan Pierson
Bright Shiny Things BSTD-0224 (digital)
96:31 mins



The premise of Mary Kouyoumdjian's *Adoration* (2024) remains as provocative

today as it was in 2008, when Atom Egoyan released the film on which her opera is based. Yet as polarisation has deepened across all areas of society, it has only increased in resonance.

A student publicly outs his father as a terrorist who tried to smuggle a bomb onboard a flight to Tel Aviv in his pregnant wife's luggage. What he doesn't say, however, is that this is a fiction, encouraged as an 'experiment' by his teacher to spur debate. With librettist Royce Vavrek neatly splicing the dialogue between characters and across time, the ensuing moral altercations heighten the emotional fallout when shocking personal twists are revealed.

Kouyoumdjian's score – combining acoustic with electronic elements and deftly performed by an excellent cast, Silvana Quartet and The Choir of Trinity Wall Street under director Alan Pierson – smartly captures the sense of unease, claustrophobia and grief.

At the same time, it's a launchpad to explore challenging intersected themes including xenophobia, betrayal, child exploitation and online hate: all laced with a cross-generational trauma and search for identity that the US composer – whose family were displaced from the Lebanese Civil War and Armenian Genocide – knows all too well. Beneath the knee-jerk and the black-and-white, acute complexities are revealed, and easy answers prove as elusive as they are ultimately hollow.

Steph Power ★★★★★

Lerner & Loewe

My Fair Lady

Scarlett Strallen, Jamie Parker et al; Sinfonia of London/John Wilson
Chandos CHSA5358(2) 130:03 mins (2CD)



Ever since its hugely successful 1956 Broadway premiere, Lerner and Loewe's musical has been

granted classic status as one of the finest works in the genre. There exist cast albums, of course, of various productions, but what is special about this new studio recording, founded on the Sinfonia of London

and its music director John Wilson, is that he gives you the original theatrical score complete, and equally importantly in the superb orchestrations by Robert Russell Bennett and Philip J Lang – which no commercial management would be able to afford nowadays, even though one might consider them to be an essential component.

In an appendix, for instance, there are extra numbers and alternative early versions of existing numbers such as Freddy's solo 'On the Street Where You Live', plus even cues. The latter may be for completists only, but the standard text is delivered to such a high standard as to make this an essential set for anyone seriously interested in the score. Apart from the outstanding orchestral playing and choral singing (Wilson rightly mentions in a booklet interview with David Benedict the genuine London or RP accents of chorus members), the finely chosen cast is a joy in terms of vocal and verbal expertise, from the likes of Scarlett Strallen (Eliza Doolittle), Jamie Parker (Professor Henry Higgins), Alun Armstrong (Alfred P Doolittle), Laurence Kilsby (Freddie Eynsford-Hill) and Malcolm Sinclair (Colonel Hugh Pickering), down to cameo appearances from Penelope Wilton (Mrs Higgins) and Julia McKenzie (Mrs Pearce). Those who already possess Wilson's similar traversals of *Carousel* and *Oklahoma!* need not hesitate. **George Hall ★★★★★**

Mozart

L'Enlèvement du Sérail

Florie Valiquette; Gwendoline Blondeel; Mathias Vidal et al; Chœur et Orchestre de l'Opéra Royal/Gaëtan Jarry
Versailles CVS154 133:34 mins (2CD)



In 1798, 16 years after its premiere in Vienna, Mozart's opera *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*

became *L'Enlèvement du Sérail* in Revolutionary Paris.

The booklet accompanying this live recording explores the contribution of Pierre-Louis Moline to the original French performances and one assumes that, while it restores words and music that were apparently cut in 1798, this version is based upon Moline's translation.

Whatever the language, it is unmistakably Mozart's masterful



Singspiel, with spoken text alongside musical numbers as a pair of aristocratic lovers – Belmont and Constance – and their amorous servants – Pédrille and Blonde – endeavour to escape enslavement in Pasha Sélim's Turkish palace.

Florie Valiquette is a silvery-toned Constance with all the vocal dexterity needed for the coloratura flights of fancy in her Act 2 aria, though the Versailles orchestra seem to lag behind her. Alas, her Belmont, Mathias Vidal, is less convincing vocally. Enguerrand de Hys is a spirited Pédrille, and you readily understand why Gwendoline Blondeel's Blonde has stolen his heart. Who wouldn't jump through a hoop for her vocal leaps and her sparkling upper register? Nicolas Brooymans's villainous Osmin makes a brave attempt at the lowest note in the bass register, while his master, Michel Fau, the Pasha, bears more than a passing vocal resemblance to the late Sir Donald Wolfitt at his most lugubrious.

Christopher Cook ★★

Rameau

Castor et Pollux (1737 Version)

Judith van Wanroij; Véronique Gens; Reinoud van Mechelen et al; Orfeo Orchestra; Purcell Choir/György Vashegyi
Alpha Classics ALPHA1148
154:55 mins (2CD)



Rameau's second *tragédie en musique* was premiered in Paris in 1737 to limited success

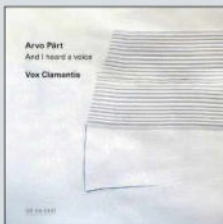
but did better in a substantially revised version first staged in 1754.

Its subject has something in common with the *Orpheus and Eurydice* legend. Castor has been killed and Pollux insists on going to the Underworld to substitute himself for his half-brother – despite the fact that they love the same woman, Têlaïre. Pollux's father Jupiter finally resolves the conundrum by appointing all three a place in the heavens.

While the jury is still out on which version is superior, this 2023 recording founded on Hungary's leading period-instrument orchestra is of the 1737 score and makes use of a recent scholarly edition offering many significant changes to what was previously available. There's a keen sense of 18th-century French style in the first-rate orchestral playing, while the cast includes several highly experienced exponents of the repertoire who capture the ornate yet expressive character of Rameau's vocal writing.

Judith Van Wanroij's limpid Têlaïre, Reinoud van Mechelen's lyrical haute-contre Castor, Véronique Gens' impassioned Phébé and Tassis Christoyannis' firm Pollux all impress, though the latter's baritone is unable to encompass the lowest notes of his bass-taille part. In smaller, multiple roles, Olivia Doray, Hasnaa Bennani, Jehanne Amzal, David Witczak and Attila Varga-Tóth fit perfectly into the vocal picture. Conductor György Vashegyi leads a fine account. **George Hall ★★★★★**

CHORAL CHOICE



A one-of-a-kind 90th birthday celebration

Estonian vocal ensemble Vox Clamantis bring Arvo Pärt's melodic splendour to life, says **Freya Parr**



The best Pärt:
Vox Clamantis
celebrate composer
Arvo Pärt (centre)

Arvo Pärt

And I heard a voice; Nunc dimittis; O Holy Father Nicholas; Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen etc

Vox Clamantis/Jaan-Eik Tulve
ECM ECM2780 42:16 mins

It's clear within minutes of this recording that Vox Clamantis are a leading interpreter of Pärt's music. They breathe it; they live it. Pärt's melodies are expertly lifted off the page and brought to life by the Estonian ensemble.

Released to mark the composer's 90th birthday, the collection follows on from Vox Clamantis's 2016 similarly captivating ECM recording *The Deer's Cry*.

This selection of predominantly new works has been recorded in the resonant splendour of Estonia's Haapsalu Cathedral, whose acoustic lends each piece an ethereal reverb. As Pärt's harmonies unfold, the ensemble perfectly captures their drama – letting each phrase build and then ring out as the progression reaches its peak. Their tuning is so locked in that it produces an overtone-like effect as it hangs in the air.

Vox Clamantis are a leading interpreter of Pärt's music – they breathe it; they live it

Scriptural verses and prayers are paired with plainchant techniques in many of the works here, a common feature of Pärt's writing. Written for the opening of the new St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church at Ground Zero in New York, *O Holy Father Nicholas* takes a prayer from Orthodox liturgy and shifts seamlessly between discomfort and resolution through suspensions. As with the rest of the programme, Vox Clamantis give space to every cadence, never rushing the moment. *Sieben Magnificat-Antiphonen* is the oldest work here, delivered with bold, brassy homophonic textures and an almost archaic sound.

It's the togetherness of Vox Clamantis that makes these works truly sing. Nothing is glossed over – Pärt's genius harmonic writing is delivered at its very best.

★★★★★

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Campra

Requiem; Miserere

Les Arts Florissants/William Christie

Pentatone PTC 5187 479 81:20 mins



Part of the aspiring generation of composers who came into their own after the

death of Lully, André Campra is only now beginning to get a better hearing on the concert platform and in the recording studio. This disc from Les Arts Florissants and their founder and director William Christie gives an insight into some of his religious music.

The Requiem is an early work and dates from Campra's time as master of music at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris. It was likely written in 1695 for the funeral of the archbishop of Paris, François de Harlay de Champvallon, and is lavishly scored for strings, woodwind and organ. The choir (divided into large and small sections) is joined by solo singers in what often sound like oratorio-style passages of commentary and reflection. These dynamics, plus shifts in pace and rhythm, give the Requiem a sense of energy as well as mourning.

The Miserere dates from 1725, by which time Campra was undermaster of music at the Royal Chapel at Versailles. Again, he blends large and small choral ensembles with solo singers and orchestra in a richly expressive reading of the penitential psalm. Both the Miserere and Requiem are performed according to historically informed standards, using period instruments that are tuned to the lower French Baroque pitch. The dry acoustics of the recording venue at Notre-Dame de Liban in Paris sometimes gives the solemn sections an overly sombre sheen, and the tolling bell ahead of the Requiem is an artificial and unnecessarily gloomy gesture.

John-Pierre Joyce ★★★

John Rutter

A Clare College Celebration: Ave Maria; A Clare Benediction; A Ukrainian Prayer etc

Choir of Clare College, Cambridge; The Dmitri Ensemble/Graham Ross et al

Harmonia Mundi HMM902764
66:54 mins



John Rutter's 80th birthday and his lifelong connection with Clare College, Cambridge, is

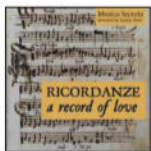
celebrated in this release, conducted with warmth by Graham Ross with the Choir of Clare College and The Dmitri Ensemble. The programme spans his student compositions, works from his tenure as director of music, and pieces commissioned or gifted to the college, several recorded here for the first time.

Rutter's hallmark style, full of memorable melodies, jaunty rhythms, emotive climaxes and harmonies that ooze sentimentality, is represented here in all its glory. As a composer, he has turned conservatism and populism into a positive strength. His ability to write pieces that choirs love to sing has won him huge appeal. His best loved works like *A Clare Benediction*, *A Gaelic Blessing*, *Ave Maria* and the *Nativity Carol* provide the template for a musical language here that has remained consistent over decades. There is a lively wit in the Shakespearean settings of *Bard's Eye View*, while *The Gift of Life* shows his deft skills as a contrapuntalist and word-setter. A highlight is the *Ukrainian Prayer* with its substantial blocks of harmony inspired by music of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The Dmitri Ensemble adds a tonal depth and dimension throughout, especially in the vibrant woodwind, horn and harp playing.

The album embodies the duality that often accompanies attitudes to Rutter's music: his melodic genius seems effortless and unstinting, but a collection like this also exposes tropes that become formulaic. Nevertheless, this is a superbly delivered, heartfelt tribute to a composer whose music has a cherished place in British choral life. **Ashutosh Khandekar ★★★★★**

Ricordanze – A Record of Love

Anonymous 16th-century works
Musica Secreta/Laurie Stras
Lucky Music LCKY005 101:48 mins (2CD)



The female voice ensemble Musica Secreta has chosen music from the 16th century Biffoli-Sostegni manuscript. It is a record of music sung by the nuns of the

convent of San Matteo in Arcetri, near Florence, and Musica Secreta has chosen a selection from the 78 pieces of polyphony.

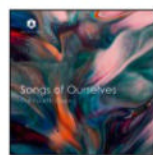
This appealingly assembled and beautifully recorded programme, highlighting varying vocal textures is dominated by two works of substance: the four-voice *Messa sopra Recordare Virgo Mater*, perhaps dating from the 1540s, and the three-voice *Messa sopra Je le larray*, seemingly belonging to the late 1520s. The texts share links with contemporary local events. While music of the mass enjoyed pre-eminent status at this time, motets, magnificats and vespers psalms also fulfilled various important roles. Musica Secreta has included a generous selection of these as well as three settings of Italian poems, of which Petrarch's *Giesù benign'è pio* is, perhaps especially affecting.

Vocal textures are luminous, balanced and the predominant *a cappella* is accompanied, where deemed beneficial, by lute, bass viol and organ. All is contained in an unusually decorative container colourfully depicting the Siege of Florence (1558) and including an informative essay by the ensemble's director Laurie Stras. The acoustics of Beaulieu Abbey Church and St. Andrew's Yetminster are ideal. Full sung texts are included.

Nicholas Anderson ★★★★★

Songs of Ourselves

Works by Kerry Andrew, Stuart Beatch, Shruthi Rajasekar et al
The Fourth Choir/Jamie Powe
Orchid Classics ORC100389 48:52 mins



Founded in 2013, The Fourth Choir seeks to represent the LGBTQ+ community on London's

classical scene. *Songs of Ourselves* is the choir's debut album and is programmed with flair, moving between Renaissance-era works and contemporary music, and featuring only underrepresented composers.

The choir itself has a distinct sound, with a less uniformly-blended timbre than many other contemporary ensembles, but the result is wonderfully rich, expressive and full of zing. The highlight of these is *Surge Propera Amica Mea*, a setting by Raffaella Aleotti (c.1570–1646), whose choral motets collection were the first published sacred music composed



The fabulous Fourth:
Jamie Powe leads The Fourth Choir through a brilliantly broad-ranging programme

by a woman. This setting of a text from the provocative 'Song of Songs' finds the choir on exuberant form, and director Jamie Powe deftly draws out the work's shifts between the declamatory and the lyrical.

Two new commissions also stand out. Stuart Beatch's setting of a passage from Walt Whitman's 'Song of Myself' is a moving celebration of self-belief, full of crunchy harmonies that the choir leans into with complete assurance. The vibrant *Wild Nights – Wild Nights!* by Kerry Andrew is more rhythmically punchy and features evocative vocal effects (including panting, whispering and cascading ululations) which the ensemble performs with aplomb.

All too often, recording projects proclaim their 'diverse' programming but are tokenistic in practice. It is refreshing to encounter a disc put together with integrity and care, and performed with such panache. The result is altogether satisfying. **Kate Wakeling ★★★★★**

The Living Fire

Works by Eleanor Daley, Matthew Martin et al
Choir of Jesus College, Cambridge/
Benjamin Sheen
CRD CRD3558 35:58 mins



The Living Fire celebrates the recent choral heritage of Jesus College, Cambridge,

showcasing the creativity of its alumni and reflecting the college's championing of contemporary music through its annual choral competition and its ongoing

commissions of new work. The distinctive timbre of the choir derives from its combination of boy choristers with adult sopranos, altos, tenors and basses. The result is a full-bodied blend that suits the repertoire's dynamic range.

The album opens with Eleanor Daley's intimate *Upon your heart*, a tender love offering for a wedding anniversary. Owen Elsley's *Love is the Peace* warms to that theme with intensity. The programme moves through the 20th century into the 21st: Richard Lloyd's *The Call* gives the boy choristers a chance to shine with its ethereal descent. William Mathias's *Evening Canticle* and David Briggs's *Jesus College Service* provide a striking contrast in their approaches to the same liturgy.

It's the newer voices, however, that lie at the heart of this. Sarah Catley and Isaac Adni's settings of Newman's *Prayer* capture a sense of yearning and serenity, while works from Dónal McCann, Ben Ponniah and Manav Paul are full of inventive contemporary idioms. The title work, *Living Fire* is a collaboration between composer Mary Offer and poet Ella Curry, who give a startling account of the coming of Pentecostal flame. The inclusion of Libby Larsen's *God so loved the world* reminds us of director Benjamin Sheen's own transatlantic career, which undoubtedly informs his relaxed, expressive conducting style.

Beautifully recorded in Jesus College Chapel's fine acoustic, the album is released by the CRD as part of its 50th anniversary and signals the label's commitment to young talent in today's choral scene. **Ashutosh Khandekar ★★★★★**

VOCAL CHOICE



An engaging recital with attentive performances

Kathryn Rudge, Alessandro Fisher and Penelope Thwaites make an impression on *Terry Blain*



Colourful programme:
(l-r) Kathryn Rudge,
Penelope Thwaites
and Alessandro Fisher

I Have Lived & Loved

Songs by Vaughan Williams, Grainger et al
Kathryn Rudge (mezzo-soprano), Alessandro Fisher
(tenor), Penelope Thwaites (piano)

Albion ALBCD066 70:33 mins

Individual songs from Vaughan Williams's *Songs of Travel* have been performed by female voices before, but this is, it seems, the first time the complete cycle has been recorded by a woman.

Kathryn Rudge is the singer in question, and she makes an instantly engaging impression in 'The Vagabond', her lush mezzo-soprano voice combining with immaculate diction and intelligent use of dynamics to clarify meaning. Rudge's 'I Have Trod the Upward and the Downward Slope' is another highlight, the singer-narrator movingly undepleted despite life's manifold trials and disappointments.

Tenor Alessandro Fisher joins Rudge for a group of nine Percy Grainger settings. Bold and ringing in 'Dedication II' and 'A Reiver's Neck-Verse', Fisher

combines memorably with Rudge in a heartfelt rendition of the vocalise 'Up-Country Song'. He also contributes three songs from Vaughan Williams's operas as well as two attractive settings by the little-known English composer John Raynor.

Rudge also has two rarities up her sleeve, by the Australian composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks. She finds a soothing vein of tenderness in 'Come Sleep', before opening full throttle in the next track, 'How Soon Will All My Lovely Days Be Over', an aria from Glanville-Hicks's unstaged opera *Sappho*.

Penelope Thwaites's accompaniments are worth mentioning; they are a model of unobtrusive supportiveness and sensitivity. The excellent booklet notes are hers too, and they bring added value to this stimulating, impressively sung recital. ★★★★★

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Mezzo Kathryn Rudge makes an instantly engaging impression

Bosmans

Songs*; *Six Préludes pour piano*; *Sonate pour violon et piano*

*Elizaveta Agrafenina (soprano), Sarah Bayens (violin), Dimitri Malignan (piano)

Edition Hortus Hortus 834 61:69 mins



Henriette Bosmans is to my ears one of the 'keepers' from the resurgence of interest in

neglected female composers. Until recently, the Dutch composer's music had all but vanished from view, but in her day, she enjoyed a successful career, was friendly with Britten and Pears, and was fortunate to survive World War II, being half Jewish. This recording is part of an excellent series reviving music by composers persecuted by the Nazis.

Bosmans's charismatic works for cello and piano have notched up some excellent recordings and this collection of songs, piano and chamber music contains works that are equally interesting. Her style has bagfuls of personality, some useful comparisons perhaps being variously Clarke, Duparc and Holst (all very different, of course, but so is she), with a focus, clarity and sweep. The *Six Preludes for Piano*, played with poise and intelligence by Dimitri Malignan, exemplify these qualities; they deserve wide take-up from recitalists.

The Violin Sonata is possibly the highlight of the record. It is perhaps slightly out of balance, with a first movement longer than the other three combined, but it overflows with impassioned ideas and is performed with tremendous gusto and commitment by Sarah Bayens and Malignan. The Norwegian soprano Elizaveta Agrafenina brings soaring tone and an irresistible feeling for drama to the songs (which are in Dutch, English and French), especially to the narrative scene 'The Artist's Secret'. One black mark on the production, however, is that the booklet yields up none of the poems, let alone translations.

Jessica Duchen ★★★★★

Gluck

Arias

Ann Hallenberg (mezzo-soprano); The Mozartists/Ian Page
Signum Classics SIGCD921 68:35 mins



Ann Hallenberg is a much-admired Swedish singer who is best known for her recordings of

Baroque music. Here, she focuses on a selection of pieces by Christoph Willibald Gluck (d.1787), whose arias have seemed to only attract recordings by three other female singers – Janet Baker (Philips), Elena de Simone (Tactus), and Cecilia Bartoli (Decca). Only the last shares items with this recording.

Hallenberg centres her selection around works Gluck composed for the great castrato Giovanni Manzuoli, beginning with 'Resta o cara' from *Il trionfo di Clelia*. Here, the character Orazio forcefully urges Clelia to put her duty to Rome above her feelings. Hallenberg manages the vocal fireworks of this splendidly assertive music with aplomb, finishing with an impressive cadenza. The rhythms in the orchestra do not quite match the alertness of the singer and, slightly oddly for a mezzo, her middle range seems a little hollow compared to her upper notes.

One piece shared with the Cecilia Bartoli disc is the fairly short aria 'Di questa cetra' in which the plucked strings imitate the lyre. Hallenberg and her orchestra set the arcadian scene perfectly, unlike the plodding version by Bartoli. Not all the pieces are captivating – 'Maggior follia' is prosaic and with a plot so obscure it is practically confidential – but the recording ends with the thrilling 'De' folgari di Giove'.

Anthony Pryer ★★★★★

Schumann • Schubert

Dichterliebe; Kerner Lieder; Doppelgänger (Schwanengesang)

Jonas Kaufmann (tenor) et al
Sony Classical G010004390264Q
140:45 mins



There's a 'dying strain' within the songs on this handsome recording.

Love as a fatal sickness that can only be healed by the beloved in *Dichterliebe* while Death itself is stalking through Claus Guth's dramatised version of *Schwanengesang* recorded for DVD in New York's Park Avenue Armory in 2023. Is the Grim Reaper perhaps our true 'Doppelgänger'?

Kaufmann and pianist Helmut Deutsch take a brisk no-nonsense approach to *Dichterliebe*, eschewing the poetic affectations that can mar readings of Schumann's cycle. Sounding ever more baritone nowadays, Kaufmann has the full measure of the drama in 'Im Rhein, im heiligen Strome' and Deutsch plunges us into the depths of the Rhine in the postlude. True, Kaufmann cannot resist a temptation to 'croon' but in 'Die alten bösen Lieder', it's used to magnificent effect.

There's not a foot-fault from either artist in the rarely performed *Kerner-Lieder* that follow. Troubled songs, settings from a poet of the second rank and written after Schumann and Clara Wieck were married, which seem to explore the composer's divided personality – light and dark. There's a winning swing to 'Wanderlied' but the pain of 'Stille Tränen' is palpable.

Always a performer, Kaufmann is at his most consistent in the DVD of *Schwanengesang*, set in a WW1 hospital with wounded soldiers and tending nurses. Echoes of artillery punctuate the atmospherically lit performance. And if Claus Guth rearranges Schubert's last songs to suit his own dramatic purposes, they do seem a cycle, not songs in two parts. **Christopher Cook** ★★★★★

Serenata a Napoli

Arias etc by Tosti et al

Pene Pati (tenor); Il Pomo D'Oro
Warner Classics 21732727817 65:06 mins



If last summer is long-forgotten, and next year's too far away to glimpse over the horizon, Pene

Pati's tribute to Neapolitan song will instantaneously transport you to a trattoria in Sorrento to be serenaded beneath the stars. Two predictable numbers act as bookends: a schmaltzy version of 'O sole mio', souped-up and exuberantly decorated, and a full-throttle *Funiculì, funiculà*, in what is surely a conscious tribute to Pavarotti. Kitsch apart, however, this disc offers some intriguing surprises.

In imaginative arrangements by Antonello Paliotti, Neapolitan music comes across as immensely varied. Most of the numbers and their composers (bar perhaps Francesco Paolo Tosti) will be unfamiliar, though apparently



Summer serenade:
Pene Pati dazzles in an
ode to Neapolitan Song

Enrico Cannio's catchy 'O surdato 'nnammurato' (an upbeat setting of letters from a World-War-One soldier to his beloved) can be heard regularly on the terraces at SSC Napoli. Some songs, which are highly chromatic and syncopated, hint at distant Spanish roots (such as Mario Pasquale Costa's *Napulitanata*), while Paliotti's own feverish *Tarantella storta* and 'Ballo' evoke Celtic influences and even hoedown.

Leaning heavily towards affairs of the heart, such as the ardent *Palomma 'è notte* (Francesco Buongiovanni), the songs are performed by Pati with considerable warmth and sincerity. Contrasting instrumental numbers are dramatic, played with verve, even frenzy, by the strings, guitars, mandolin and castanets of Il Pomo d'Oro. The disc must have been great fun to record; it's certainly tremendous fun to listen to. **Alexandra Wilson** ★★★★★

The World Feels Dusty

Songs by Barber, Chausson, Copland, Debussy and Walton

Sarah Connolly (mezzo-soprano), Joseph Middleton (piano)
Chandos CHAN20285 57:57 mins



At first glance, it might seem a bit odd to entitle a disc dominated by Chausson and Debussy at their

most voluptuous and sultry *The World Feels Dusty*. True, it's taken from one of two Emily Dickinson settings by Copland also included; but in fact the *Poème de l'amour de*

la mer and *Trois Chansons de Bilitis* map a world in which ardent love turns to ash – a theme of the Samuel Barber settings of James Joyce too.

And death-conscious Dickinson also infiltrates Errollyn Wallen's *Night Thoughts*, written for the performers in 2023 and receiving a CD premiere here. The result is a typically adroit programme from a collaborative partnership whose long-honed rapport pivots from the foam-flecked Wagnerian ecstasy of Chausson to the bluesy inflexions of the last two songs of Wallen's nocturnal meditation, without batting an eyelid.

The Chausson is infallibly paced, both musicians instinctively knowing where a phrase is heading and where each moment of intensity lands. The orchestrally conceived piano writing shimmers, Middleton moulds the Franckian harmonic soul-searching with conspicuous care, and Connolly's command of colour is sovereign. Even better is the Debussy: 'La flûte de Pan', deliciously languid and teasing and 'Le Tombeau des Naiades', a compelling descent into newly-awakened self-knowledge.

Occasionally, Connolly's vibrato is perhaps a touch over-generous, but there's no gainsaying the fun she has with the bluesy brilliance of Wallen's 'Bright Lights', a salute to Ella Fitzgerald. Those lights dim, acknowledging regret for the path not taken, and the bluesiness is compounded by the last song: a response to Howard Hodgkin's *Night Thoughts*, the painting that inspired the set. **Paul Riley** ★★★★★

CHAMBER CHOICE



A thrilling album cements Fretwork's place at the top

Ingrid Pearson is captivated by this stunning showcase of John Jenkins works for viol consort and organ



Eloquence and ingenuity: Fretwork are joined by organist Silas Wollston

John Jenkins

The Virtuoso Consort (Division)

Silas Wollston (organ); Fretwork
Signum Classics SIGCD938 77:59 mins

Formed in 1986, British viol ensemble Fretwork enjoy an international reputation for stylistic versatility in repertoire spanning five centuries. This release is their second for Signum Classics devoted to the music of 17th-century English composer John Jenkins. In this sumptuous celebration of Jenkins's contributions to the viol fantasia, the five members of Fretwork are joined by organist Silas Wollston.

The album opens with the three-movement D major Fantasia Suite (pairs of treble and bass viols with organ). A graceful and thoughtful *Fantasia*, an elegant *Almain* (Allemande) and a majestic *Corant* (Courante) demonstrate the ebullience of Jenkins's dialogue between the viols.

Three works in the key of D minor acutely embody the profundity noted of this key by 17th-century musicians. In the G minor Fantasia Suite (treble and

two bass viols) textural warmth and timbral depth are persuasively conveyed by Emilia Benjamin, Sam Stadlen and Richard Boothby. They weave melodic lines with virtuosity, harnessing the delicious interplay between dissonance and consonance. The D minor Fantasia Suite, described as a 'masterpiece' in Boothby's eloquent liner notes, was first recorded by Fretwork in 1995 for Erato.

Their latest interpretation is even more dignified and compelling, and here, as throughout, Wollston is the perfect musical partner.

Amidst such richness the bowed articulatory dexterity of the C major *Fancy* and *Air Divisions* (two trebles, one bass viol and organ) is just thrilling.

This magnificent album celebrates the eloquence and ingenuity of early tonal music, and confirms Fretwork's prominence amongst its interpreters.

★★★★★

Fretwork harness the delicious interplay between dissonance and consonance

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Beethoven

Violin Sonatas Nos 2 & 10

Viktoria Mullova (violin), Alasdair Beatson (piano)

Signum Classics SIGCD920 42:29 mins



My bet is that the first thing you'll notice about this recording is the sound of the instruments:

we're no longer in the sleek world of Steinways and gleaming steel-string violins. Instead, ready yourself for rustic texture and bags of character, thanks to gut strings and a classical bow for violinist Viktoria Mullova, copies of two different 19th-century fortepianos for Alasdair Beatson, and a recording from Signum that doesn't smooth over the sound.

Once your ear has acclimatised, it might well be the energy and sheer brio that Mullova and Beatson bring to Beethoven's violin sonatas that hooks you in. Take the *Allegro vivace* of the Sonata No. 2 in A major, for instance. Their playing is as springy as hilltop heather, and bounces around with general bonhomie. The *Andante* draws out fine lyrical playing from both musicians, their rapport feeling instinctive and spontaneous, and the finale charms.

Beatson swaps from the 1805 fortepiano copy to an 1819 Graf copy for the G major Sonata No. 10, an instrument that aptly brings mellower and more varied colours to the palette for this later, strikingly original work. It's a wonderful performance that becomes richer on each listening, with the sense they're discovering this music afresh as they play, even while every note and nuance is internalised. They beautifully capture the questing, improvisatory feel and rhetorical gestures of the first movement, while Mullova's *sotto voce* playing in the *Adagio espressivo* seems to lead us into other realms. The *Scherzo* is short and spritely, and they enter entirely into the spirit of the *Poco allegretto* finale, which dances and darts, wrongfooting and delighting us. *Rebecca Franks*
★★★★★

Franck • Maier • Schumann

Violin Sonatas

Duo Concertante: Nancy Dahn (violin), Timothy Steeves (piano)
Delphian DCD34316 61:56 mins



The first movement of the Schumann is marked 'with passionate expression',

and Dahn's tone is certainly full and vibrant, but the tempo lacks urgency, and the range of colour and dynamics from both players could be wider. Rubato sounds careful, and laid on from outside, rather than growing organically from the music: I pulled the recording by Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt off the shelf and was immediately gripped by a more immersive experience – troubled and turbulent, reflecting Schumann's angry state of mind when he wrote the work. The second movement is a more genial *Allegretto*, and its playful, sometimes teasing character is better caught, but the wild ride of the finale is again rather too tame.

Amanda Maier comes from the generation after Schumann, but his influence comes through in her Sonata, which begins in the same direct way, although with a quality more yearning than aggressive, which finds the performers better in sympathy. The lilt of the second movement has real charm, and the alternating lightness and lyricism of the final *rondo* flow dexterously.

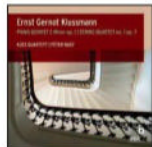
In the Franck, the strengths and weaknesses of the performers are clearly brought out: lyrical passages, like the openings of the first and last movements, have clarity and affection; and the improvisatory third movement, if a little strait-laced at times, finds the different colours of the various themes. Where they don't convince is in the stormy second movement, and the big climaxes in the finale – the power just isn't there, unfortunately.

Martin Cotton ★★★

Klussmann

Piano Quintet in E minor*; String Quartet No. 1

*Péter Nagy (piano); Kuss Quartet
EDA Records EDA55 64:12 mins



Ernst Gernot Klussmann (1901-1975) was one of a number of promising composers who,

for better or worse, chose to remain in Germany during the Third Reich. Unfortunately, the consequences of this decision were to prove highly damaging. Following the end of the



Bags of character:
Viktoria Mullova and
Alasdair Beatson
take on Beethoven

Second World War, Klussmann was ostracised, and although he secured a prestigious teaching post in West Germany, his music remained largely unperformed and overlooked.

By now, enough time has passed for a serious re-evaluation of composers like Klussmann to take place, and this enterprising release will surely help to rekindle interest in his output. The two large-scale works featured here are products of the turbulent 1920s when Klussmann was striving to achieve a personal voice. As an opus 1, his Piano Quintet is certainly a bold and impressive achievement, full of impassioned rhetoric, and in places strongly indebted to Brahms. I must confess that I found it a bit overblown at times, particularly in the outer movements, and wonder whether the work as a whole would have made more impact if it had been less musically verbose. Still, there's no doubting the commitment of pianist Péter Nagy and the Kuss Quartet who extract the maximum amount of energy and dramatic incident from Klussmann's writing.

To my mind, the First String Quartet, also performed here with powerful commitment, is a far more interesting work, exploring a quasi-expressionist sound world that suggests the fruitful influence of Bartók and Schoenberg. This display of overt modernism begs the obvious question as to the ways in which Klussmann modified his musical language in the 1930s

to appease the Nazi authorities. Hopefully, we might get some answers to this with subsequent releases of Klussmann's music.

Erik Levi ★★★

Lawrence Rose

String Quartets

Tippett Quartet
Convivium CR108 67:37 mins



What a determined and thoughtful composer

Lawrence Rose is. Largely self-

taught in music, he pushed his passion mostly to one side while working in Britain as a lawyer, only to take early retirement and move to Chicago, where he's notched up over 30 opus numbers within 24 years. The works are not flighty creations either: five symphonies, three violin concertos, five string quartets. The present album features the 36-minute Quartet No.4, a meaty affair (think Bartók, Shostakovich). There's also *Danses pour Quatuor*, an earlier work structured on French Baroque lines but with dances including the tango, and a foxtrot with a twelve-tone theme: a fusion of old forms and new thinking typical of Rose's approach to everything from harmony to sonata form.

At 31 minutes, *Danses* proves rather too long, and doesn't always sit easily on the ear. The opening movement, *Rigaudon*, is notably dissonant, though the music's tangles decrease over time. The

Tippett Quartet, however, relish every note. The string quartet is equally obdurate at the start, choking its first movement with so much organic development of tiny cells that you wish the composer would stop thinking so hard and take time to relax. Later movements, happily, are better balanced between tough musical fibre and pleasurable listening. But whatever the mood and the music's density, the Tippett Quartet remain superb musicians and advocates. Geoff Brown ★★★

Mozart

6 String Quintets on Historical Instruments

Spunicunifait
Alpha Classics ALPHA1137 178 mins
(3 discs)



The players take their odd name from a mysterious word found among the scatological letters

Mozart sent to a cousin, and they make a speciality out of his string quintets with two violas, which form the pinnacle of his chamber music. Their performances have their impressive moments – notably, in the concluding variations of the C minor Quintet K406 (Mozart's arrangement of his austere wind serenade in the same key) – but, alas, they're generally marred by attempts to heighten the music's drama and expressive character through constant fluctuations of tempo and exaggerated dynamic

BRIEF NOTES



Unsung genius:
Ryo Terakado and
Fabio Bonizzoni
champion CPE Bach

CPE Bach Sonatas for Violin and Harpsichord

Ryo Terakado (violin); Fabio Bonizzoni (harpsichord)

Challenge Classics CC72971 72.29 mins



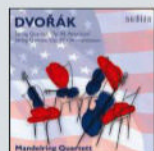
Long overshadowed in the modern imagination by his father Johann Sebastian, CPE Bach's own genius shines through in this superlative album from two masterful performers. It opens with an enthralling, heart-aching account of the Fantasia in F sharp minor, written in 1788, the year CPE Bach died,

with its first movement marked 'very sad and utterly slow'. Elsewhere, we find CPE in all his sparky, energetic and expressive glory in three sonatas from 1763. *Rebecca Franks* ★★★★★

Dvořák String Quartet, 'American' Op.96, String Quintet, Op.97 & Humoresques, Op.101

Mandelring Quartett; Roland Glassl

Audite AUDITE97828 77.08mins



The Mandelring Quartet – three Schmidt siblings plus long-time friend and violist Andreas Willwohl – are full of vim and vigour in works from Dvořák's US period. The 'American' Quartet showcases their earthy warmth and a beautiful sense of balance – and joined by violist Roland Glassl in the String

Quintet, there's a skip in their step. The new *Humoresque* arrangements err a little on the side of heaviness, however. *Charlotte Smith* ★★

Umbrellas Works by Brahms, Gershwin, Piazzolla et al

Far Flung Trio Orchid Classics ORC100370 1.30.52 mins



Who'd have thought you could have just so much fun with a violin, accordion and double bass (and, briefly, voice)? Ireland's Far Flung Trio spread the umbrella wide here, covering classical music with the likes of 'L'amour est un oiseau rebelle' from Bizet's *Carmen* and Satie's *Gymnopédie* No. 1, taking in moments of

folk and some 20th-century American song from Gershwin and Joe Ricardel/Redd Evans, and stopping off at the movies with big-screen classics by Morricone and Michel Legrand. Moods and nationalities aplenty, then, all played with pizzazz and joy. *Jeremy Pound* ★★★★★

contrasts. The opening movement of the last quintet, K614, for instance, features forceful 'hunting' calls on the violas alternating with gentle answering phrases from the violins, but here the ideas are played in wholly different tempi, so that the music lurches from one to the other, and the two never gel. And in the finale, the episode in the minor is so slow in relation to the remainder that it seems to belong to another piece altogether.

The slow movement of the C major Quintet K515 is a love-duet for the first violin and first viola, delivered here, in a plodding manner, with a plethora of accents that rob the music of its warmth and lyricism. There's a slight controversy about the sequence of this quintet's inner movements, but Mozart almost certainly intended the *Minuetto* to precede the slow movement, which is how the players do it – despite the reverse-order track-listing in the booklet. Nor, in connection with the immature First Quintet K174, is the additional track containing an earlier attempt at its finale – wisely discarded by Mozart – explained anywhere. *Misha Donat* ★★

Fantasia

Works for Trumpet & Organ by JS Bach, Krebs, Pachelbel, Owain Park, Roxanna Panufnik et al

Matilda Lloyd (trumpet), Richard Gowers (organ)

Chandos CHAN20345 59.12 mins



The combination of trumpet and organ is a time-honoured one. It may not always seem necessary,

given the trumpet's own organ stops, but it works well in terms of balance and has inspired plenty of repertoire. By contrast, less likely combinations such as violin and organ are unsurprisingly rare, though that only makes, say, Josef Rheinberger's chamber music with organ all the more valuable. There are very few works on this new release from the outstanding trumpeter Matilda Lloyd, in partnership with the organist Richard Gowers, to really treasure, though it's good to hear Marie-Claire Alain's arrangements of Giovanni Battista Martini, vibrantly projected on Lloyd's piccolo trumpet (in all, she plays five different

instruments on this recording). Lloyd's own transcriptions of Johann Ludwig Krebs are similarly successful.

Four specially commissioned pieces – from Roxanna Panufnik, Richard Barnard, Deborah Pritchard and Owain Park – receive premiere recordings. Park's *Warm, Hazy Rain* could easily serve as the, er, umbrella title for all of them; none is exactly a wash-out, yet despite their pleasantly contrasting textures they are scarcely memorable enough to deserve such a showcase. There's also little that is genuinely special about the organ of Waltham Abbey, but it would still have been better heard alone in some of this music: unexpectedly, Bach is the biggest casualty here, especially in an arrangement of the *Tocatta and Fugue* in D minor (itself thought to be an arrangement...) that truly messes about with the music's textures. *John Allison* ★★

River of Music

Works by Chopin, Elgar, Handel, Liszt, Schubert et al

The Kanneh-Masons

Decca 4871277 70.22 mins



Often hailed as the UK's most musical family, the Kanneh-Masons are a remarkably

gifted group of siblings. While several family members have pursued their own successful recording projects, this appealing disc is the second album to feature the siblings as a whole, and follows on from *Carnival*, their playful take on the *Carnival of the Animals*, released in 2020.

River of Music is a more introspective offering which traces the Kanneh-Mason's musical connections across generations and continents, charting the family's roots in Sierra Leone, the Caribbean, and Wales, while also celebrating the siblings' own classical favourites. Fittingly, the disc opens with a luxuriant arrangement for piano and strings of 'Deep River' by Samuel Coleridge Taylor, a British composer whose father was from Sierra Leone, before the disc winds its way through various Welsh folk song arrangements and an array of chamber music staples. The disc's most substantial work (which sits at the centre of the family's musical lore, having been played 'on repeat'

Chamber Reviews

during family car journeys) is Schubert's 'Trout' Quintet. This receives a terrifically spirited performance, especially in the mischievous *Scherzo*.

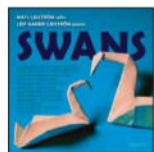
Quite how convincingly the family-history narrative holds the album together is debatable; certain pieces feel somewhat tenuously connected and the sleeve notes are rather opaque. Narrative aside, though, the repertoire choices are well balanced and there is some excellent playing. A restrained performance of the Welsh hymn *Calon Lân* (cleverly arranged for violin duet) is spellbinding, while cellist Sheku and pianist Isata create a wonderful sense of line in their tender account of Dvořák's 'Song to the Moon'. Whether or not the theme always quite holds up, *River of Music* thus proves an enjoyable album from this remarkable family. *Kate Wakeling* ★★★★★

Swans

Works by Gibbons, Saint-Saëns, Szymanowski et al

Mats Lidström (cello), Leif Kaner-Lidström (piano)

Hyperion CDA68475 67:44 mins



A mastery of Saint-Saëns's 'The Swan', from *The Carnival of the Animals*, has become

a rite of passage for many an aspiring young cellist. While not technically demanding, it requires judicious balance of lightness and vibrato-laden intensity to ensure its plaintive melody glides, then soars across the piano's rippling

arpeggios. Its familiar strains make it a popular encore – but rarely does it garner quite the attention it receives here, where it proves the inspiration for an entire album.

Originally conceived as a centenary tribute to Saint-Saëns in 2021, but thwarted by the pandemic, father and son finally venture out onto the water with two dozen swans in tow. And what a flock! Each one plucked from repertoire spanning six centuries, displaying an array of colours and bearings: black, white and silver, sleeping, singing and dying. This is clearly a labour of love from two widely admired musicians, not only in terms of the transcriptions and arrangements – adding bars, changing register but never 'fiddling with the harmony' – but in the tender partnership between father and son. The sleeve notes share personal as well as historical notes, and Mats's composition, inspired by 'Le Cygne', is ascribed to his son: '... for Leif with all my heart'. Leif's own offering is a beautifully expressive composition deserving of repeated listening.

Musically, all swans are not created equal, but it is, as ever, about personal taste, and the performances are faultless. There are some lovely finds here, including Fanny Mendelssohn's 'Schwanenlied', arrangements of Renaissance madrigals by Orlando Gibbons and Jacques Arcadelt, and offerings by Harry Farjeon, Ravel, Tchaikovsky and Schubert. An album that lingers in the memory far beyond the fading of its final notes. *Suzanne Rolt* ★★★★★



Family ties:
father Mats and son
Leif Kaner-Lidström



TIPPETT BRITTEN WALTON

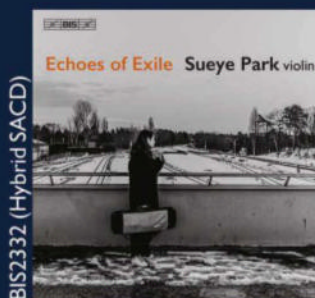
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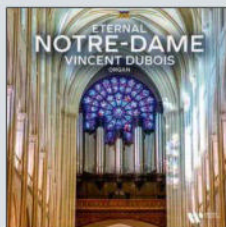
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Gramophone Magazine,
September 2025

Instrumental

INSTRUMENTAL CHOICE



A triumphant return for the Notre-Dame organ

Paul Riley is captivated by this infectious collection of feel-good crowd-pleasers, masterfully performed



Lazer-sharp precision: Vincent Dubois gives thrilling performances

Eternal Notre-Dame

Works by JS Bach, Franck, Widor et al
Vincent Dubois (organ)

Erato 2173281884 84:06 mins

Emerging largely unscathed after the fire that ravaged Notre-Dame de Paris, in December last year, on the eve of the cathedral's reopening, the 'grand' organ was solemnly blessed and 'reawakened'. Despite a galaxy of world leaders present, there was no concession to popular taste as the 'titulaire' organists let fly a bracing volley of challenging improvisations. Not so this first disc showcasing the magnificently restored instrument – and one of the 'titulaires' who 'reawakened' it. Vincent Dubois juxtaposes original 'pops' such as the Widor 'Toccata' and Vierne's 'Carillon de Westminster' with transcriptions by some of his predecessors, including such crowd-pleasers as Rachmaninov's doleful C sharp minor Prelude, Op. 3 No. 2 or Rimsky Korsakov's 'The Flight of the Bumble Bee'. And in a nod to Ravel 150, Dubois contributes his own suave arrangements of three movements from *Le Tombeau de Couperin*.

Its vivacity would put a smile on the face of the most hardened organ sceptic

Keeping things very much 'en famille', virtually everything on the CD owes a debt to the musical heritage of Notre Dame; and if that wasn't enough to justify the pedestrian-seeming programme, the vibrant sound of the restored organ, the quality of the recording itself, and above all Dubois' thrilling, laser-sharp precision, more than quell misgivings.

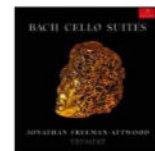
Dupré's appropriation of JS Bach's Sinfonia to Cantata 29 simply sizzles; Vierne's 'Naiades' is a deliquescent complement to the grandiloquent 'Carillon de Westminster'; and a powerful case is made for Cochereau's percussion-underpinned *Boléro* saluting 17th-century Notre-Dame forebear Charles Racquet. With piquant showmanship to spare, Dubois ends with Balbastre's exuberant take on 'La Marseillaise'. It crowns an invigorating 'welcome back' whose infectious vivacity would put an approving smile on the face of even the most hardened organ sceptic. ★★★★★

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JS Bach

Cello Suites (arr. trumpet)
Jonathan Freeman-Attwood
(trumpet)

Deux-Elles DXL-1207 98:02 mins (2CD)



JS Bach's six Suites for solo cello, BWV 1007-1012, were relatively unknown until

they were recorded in full by the Spanish cellist Pablo Casals. Casals's recordings for HMV between 1936 and 1939 helped establish the Suites' canonical status, and they are now synonymous with artistic and technical virtuosity, aspects which Jonathan Freeman-Attwood's double album embodies. Freeman-Attwood will be known to readers as a record producer, broadcaster, conservatoire leader and trumpet soloist. The latter comes to the fore in this recording of his own transcription of the Suites.

The recording coincides with Edition Peters's publication of Freeman-Attwood's transcription. Bach's music is transposed into more idiomatic keys for the trumpet, and Freeman-Attwood maintains each suite's integrity amidst reworking of melodic lines to accommodate the trumpet's smaller range. Despite some timbral inconsistencies and occasional blemishes of intonation, listeners will enjoy the trumpet's range of articulatory colours, particularly at the start of notes and phrases. CD 1 opens with the Fifth Suite: its *Prelude* has an engaging improvisatory character, concluding with a lithe fugue. Suite No. 3's *Bourrées* include subtle and stylish ornamentation. Suite No. 4 concludes the first CD, its *Sarabande* demonstrating the compromises made in transcribing the cello's stopped notes. Here and elsewhere the approach often hinders the sense of pulse. The *Prelude* of Suite No. 1, (CD 2, track 1) uses agile tonguing to highlight the upper melodic voice. The release concludes with Suite No. 6, where the *Gigue*'s wide melodic lines are still idiomatic, however technically challenging.

Amidst the enduring appeal of JS Bach's music Jonathan Freeman-Attwood's trumpet arrangement of the Cello Suites is a welcome reinvigoration of these highly revered works. *Ingrid Pearson*
★★★★

JS Bach

The Well-Tempered Clavier, Book 1

Mahan Esfahani (harpsichord)
Hyperion CDA684512 107:47 mins (2CD)



Liner notes are important. They are the main reason why most readers of this magazine

emphatically prefer a physical CD to a will-o'-the-wisp version floating in a digital void. And there are many ways of writing liner notes. They can be a listener's guide, or a sketch of the music's historical background, and they can situate the music in the composer's oeuvre; if these miniature essays are done well, they can brilliantly illuminate the music.

We've come to expect excellent liner notes with Hyperion CDs, but Mahan Esfahani's essay on his performance of the first book of JS Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* is a shocker. Its prose is stilted, convoluted and at times ungrammatical; its arguments are sometimes self-contradictory, with banalities dressed up as quasi-scholarly pronouncements. It's not at all clear what Esfahani wants to say. Was there no editor in the house?

So, to the music. To extract colour and atmosphere from a harpsichord is a much bigger challenge than to do so from a Steinway, but Esfahani brings a pleasantly varied palette to his task. But he's not a purveyor of poetry or mystery: where those qualities are required, as in the trill-bedecked G minor Prelude or the penultimate Prelude, we wait in vain; his version of the graceful B flat minor Prelude is pedestrian. This a plain and straightforward account of Bach's great work, but the playing is clean and never burdened with superfluous ornamentation. **Michael Church ★★**

Caprice Reimagined

Works for Solo Natural Horn by Galle, Timo Andres, Michael Finnissy, Dai Fujikura, Grace-Evangeline Mason et al
Isaac Shieh (natural horn)
New Focus Recordings FCR445 128:58 mins (2CD)



The predecessor of the current day French horn is the natural horn, where the fundamental

difference is the lack of valves – meaning different notes have to be achieved through techniques with the hand and embouchure. Isaac Shieh's album showcases one earlier composer, as well as inviting contemporary creators to contribute to the instrument's repertoire.

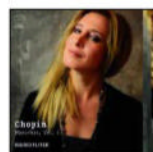
The contemporary pieces are interspersed with *Douze Grand Caprices* for the natural horn by the 19th-century composer Jacques-François Gallay and explore a variety of techniques and timbres. *Ele* by Dai Fujikura, for example, features lip trills, explosive crescendos and microtones.

Microtones feature strongly on this album – essentially because the natural horn automatically lends itself to this, and modern composers have a curiosity with the timbre and style. *Chuan II* by Sun Keting, delves into different interpretations of pulse, space and pitch – leaving an impression of a prayerful journey immersed in Eastern culture.

By far the most entertaining piece however is *Loud Ciphers* by Timo Andres, which Shieh attacks with gusto, enthusiasm and impressive technique. This bright spot on the album is only one of two, along with Scott Wollschlaeger's *You Are Perfect Just As You Are*: multi-tracking provides overlapping lines and chords along with effects using multiphonics, open and stopped notes, and sounds akin to the didgeridoo. This, along with Georgia Scott's fascinating *The Ghost in the Machine* and Robin Haigh's peaceful, rural representation *Dock Leaf*, provides stimulation on an album, which at over two hours long is likely to please only the most ardent fans of solo natural horn. **Anne Templer ★★**

Chopin

Mazurkas, Vol. 1
Ingrid Fliter (piano)
Linn Records CKD780 76:58 mins



No composer has defined Ingrid Fliter's career more than Fryderyk Chopin: the Buenos Aires-

born pianist won second prize at the Chopin Competition in Warsaw in 2000 and her subsequent discography reflects how Chopin has remained her lodestar. If that means there is nothing surprising about her decision to start recording the complete Mazurkas, everything

Extraordinary insight:
Ingrid Fliter's latest
Chopin offering
is a triumph



else about her latest album is extraordinary, and breathtaking for the insightful musicianship she brings to bear on these unshowy pieces.

Her approach is chronological, and the focus of this recording is on the Opp. 6, 7, 24, 50 and 59 sets. Playing on a Fazioli – whose sound is, among modern pianos, especially well-suited to this music – Fliter casts a magical spell in the Op. 6 No. 1, the F sharp minor Mazurka that she delivers with a mix of shy hesitancy and headlong energy. Indeed, her approach to rubato is always idiomatic, when her tempo choices stand out for being different to many performers, that are fully justified and never indulgent. She sustains the longest of these pieces (Op. 24 No. 4) with special feeling and her interpretations of the Opp. 50 and 59 sets bear out what Jim Samson means in his liner notes when he calls them 'dance poems on the grandest scale'.

It takes a pianist of Fliter's stature to make something of the six unassuming early Mazurkas without opus numbers with which she opens; with perfect symmetry, her performance of Chopin's last work, the Mazurka in F minor, supplies an elegiac end. **John Allison ★★★★★**

Elgar • Holst

Elgar: Introduction and Allegro; Salut d'Amour; Holst: The Planets (all arr. two pianos)
Tessa Uys, Ben Schoeman (pianos)
SOMM Recordings SOMMCD0709 62:54 mins



The music for Holst's perennially popular suite *The Planets* was initially written

in a version for two pianos and later orchestrated. This new recording is the third currently available of that original redaction and makes for intermittently intriguing listening. 'Mars' makes a suitably glowering impact in Tessa Uys and Ben Schoeman's interpretation, but the percussive rhythms seem more sharply pointed in Len Vorster and Robert Chamberlain's Naxos performance, where the two pianos are also more spatially separated.

The finely sifted textures in Uys and Schoeman's 'Venus' strongly recall Debussy, and there is a pleasing airiness and agility in the pair's rendition of 'Mercury'. Here I prefer the cleaner articulation achieved by Uys and Schoeman; Vorster and Chamberlain sound a touch harried by comparison. There's a swagger to Uys and Schoeman's 'Jupiter' which occasionally turns clunky, but successfully highlights an almost Poulenc-like sense of mischief in the music. 'Neptune's' piano figurations evoke Liszt and Ravel, though the closely balanced recording prevents the movement feeling as ethereal and other-worldly as it might.

The other main work is Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* for strings, in an arrangement for two players at one piano. If the string of chattering semiquavers at the start of the *Allegro* section sound slightly

effortful, the 'devil of a fugue' (Elgar's description) which comes later has a pleasing incisiveness and a distinctive neo-Baroque flavour. Devotees of four-hand piano repertoire will undoubtedly find this album interesting, but its broader appeal is probably limited. **Terry Blain ★★★**

D Scarlatti

Keyboard Sonatas

Javier Perianes (piano)

Harmonia Mundi HMM902768 67:51 mins



Well known for his interpretation of compatriot composers, Spanish pianist Javier Perianes here turns his attention to a selection of Domenico Scarlatti's keyboard sonatas. Though Scarlatti was Italian by birth he spent the last 28 years of his life in Spain, and it is certainly not fanciful to discern Iberian characteristics in the rhythms and variegated colours

which radiate these wonderfully rewarding pieces.

Perianes has chosen 15 from a staggering 555 keyboard sonatas, seemingly demonstrating a predilection for those of a reflective character. It is these, on balance, which fare best on a modern Steinway piano. Those four in the key of F minor are illustrative of Scarlatti's hauntingly lingering art of projecting melancholy introspection through affective harmonies and melodic contours.

Providing contrast with these F minor pieces are a handful in which Perianes explores more extrovert musical gestures. One of them, in E major, K380, is among the best-known of all Scarlatti's sonatas, where repeated notes contribute to a percussive image, almost visual in its impact. A similar effect is felt, though to a lesser extent, in the G major Sonata, K125. We find Scarlatti at his most playful in the E flat Sonata, K193, while the F sharp minor Sonata, K448 is restlessly

energetic. Brief but recurring patterns of dialogue in K462 bring Rameau to mind, while K386 and K462 contain lively chromaticism.

Apart from a single instance, – K380, where I found some embellishments inapposite – Perianes' playing discovers Scarlatti's expressive diversity with intimacy and communicative warmth. **Nicholas Anderson ★★★★★**

Schubert • Beethoven

Schubert: Piano Sonatas in A major, D664 and C minor, D958; **Beethoven:** 32 Variations on an Original Theme in C minor Can Çakmur (piano)

BIS BIS-2750 65:05 mins



How to compose after Beethoven? That was the thorny question on the mind of many

19th-century composers, and Schubert was no exception. For pianist Can Çakmur, the Sonata D664 offers the key. Here, he contends in his persuasive booklet notes, Schubert brings the lied into the sonata, opening with a melody and accompaniment texture, which Beethoven had never done.

Çakmur backs it up with exquisite playing that sings and sparkles – in the finale, his fingers dance as if he were a ballerina *en pointe*. Throughout, his approach is intimate, as if we are eavesdropping on the recording, being drawn in close. He describes Schubert's sonatas as being written from a traveller's perspective, following a 'melody-woven narrative in which landscapes appear to change gradually', and that's borne out by his playing which leads us unerringly through the shifting emotions and harmonic colours.

If the A major Sonata is about Schubert being thoroughly Schubertian, the C minor Sonata D958 is, suggests Çakmur, about Schubert paying tribute to Beethoven, who had just died. In particular, he wonders, as have others, if it takes its cue from the 32 Variations on an Original Theme in C minor, which appear in the middle of this album, in an emphatic, crisply articulated performance. There are certainly Beethovenian touches aplenty in Schubert's C minor, from the opening gesture to the consolatory *Adagio*, and at times it feels Çakmur

is imagining the two composers in dialogue. It's a perceptive, rich and detailed reading.

Rebecca Franks ★★★★★

Libro primo

Works by Foscari, Gianoncelli, Kapsberger and D Ortiz

Rolf Lislevand (archlute etc)

ECM ECM 2848 45:18 mins



With *Libro primo*, Norwegian lutenist Rolf Lislevand delves into the experimental

sound world of Italian Baroque composers Kapsberger, Foscari and Gianoncelli, as he leafs through their first publications – the ground-breaking 'libri primi' of the disc's title. At the dawn of the 17th century, the new recitational language of opera and the virtuosic *stylus fantasticus* – the 'fantastic style' – of instrumental music fuelled an unprecedented freedom of expression, which Lislevand (here playing archlute and chitarrone) embraces with characteristic flair.

Kapsberger's toccatas – placed like stepping stones throughout the programme – exemplify this revolutionary style. Their brooding, exotic harmonies and unmeasured rhythms – sometimes restless, sometimes suspended in silence – turn what originated as 'warm-up' exercises into emotionally charged vehicles of expression. Ever responsive to their volatile twists and turns, Lislevand intensifies their spontaneity with extemporised passages, very much in the spirit of a Baroque musician. Similarly improvisatory is Lislevand's own *Passacaglia al modo mio*: a personal meditation on the hypnotic Baroque ground bass, threaded with musical memories, from Bach to Keith Jarrett.

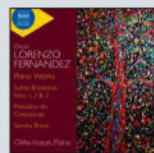
Other programme highlights (all beautifully recorded by ECM) are Foscari's wistful 'Tasteggiata' and Gianoncelli's 'Corrente con le sue spezzate' which pulses with jazzy vitality. Along with the Italian pieces are two *Recercadas* by the Spaniard Diego Ortiz, who traces a subtle line between Renaissance sobriety and Baroque invention; his soulful *Recercada quinta* makes a haunting conclusion to a programme which throws the 'authenticity' creed to the wind, evaporating the distinction between past and present.

Kate Bolton-Porciatti ★★★★★

BRIEF NOTES

Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez Piano Works

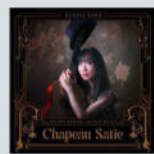
Clélia Iruzun (piano) *Naxos 8.574593 1:12:39*



A contemporary and compatriot of Villa-Lobos, Oscar Lorenzo Fernandez (1897-1948) is best known today for his orchestral suite *Reisado do Pastoreio*. Elegantly played here by Clélia Iruzun, his piano works are short – generally around three minutes or so – melodious and largely very charming. Among them, the highlights are the three *Suites Brasileiras* in which, as the name implies, the composer proudly wears his national colours, plus the feisty, technically challenging *Sonata Breve*. **Jeremy Pound ★★★★★**

Satie Works arr. Solo guitar, solo guitar and flute*, solo guitar and soprano**

Xuefei Yang (guitar), Sharon Bezaly (flute)*, Héloïse Werner (soprano)** *Platoon PLAT26708 44:25 mins*



This beautiful album reimagines Satie's *Gymnopédies* and *Gnossiennes*, art songs and cabaret melodies for solo guitar – plus flute and voice, as required. Yang's sensitively plucked strings are enchanting throughout, and joined by Bezaly's flute, she's a nuanced chamber partner. For me, though,

Werner's eccentric vocal stylings break the tranquil spell somewhat. **Charlotte Smith ★★★★★**

Valentin Silvestrov Piano Works (...flowering over Lethe)

Alexei Lubimov (piano) *Fuga Libera FUG846 1:12:87*



When Alexei Lubimov put on a concert featuring Valentin Silvestrov and Schubert in Moscow in 2022, he was interrupted by the police – but he defied them and continued to play. Now the anti-Putin Russian pianist, long a friend of the Ukrainian composer, has recorded a pristine album of his meditative solo piano miniatures, with pieces inspired by figures from Purcell to Pärt. **Rebecca Franks ★★★★★**



John Ireland is widely regarded as one of the greatest British composers of the twentieth century, his contribution to the piano solo repertoire is of great significance.

This album, performed by award-winning pianist Rebeca Omordia, is an exploration of John Ireland's piano music composed over a period of almost forty years, his distinctly English yet individualistic musical style is reflected in works bearing evocative titles that reveal Ireland's deep connection to landscapes and literature, creating a unique sound world.



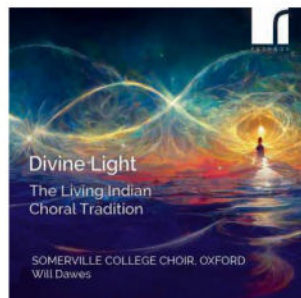
Mirrors and Echoes
Aida Lahlou (piano)



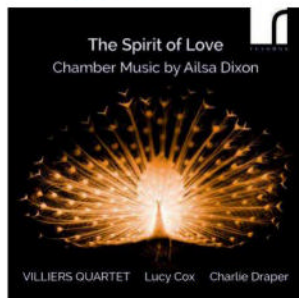
Henriette Bosmans: Concertos
Gemma Rosefield (cello), Benjamin Nabarro (violin), Rowan Pierce (soprano)
BBC Philharmonic Orchestra,
George Vass (conductor)



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Divine Light: The Living Indian Choral Tradition
Somerville College Choir, Oxford
Will Dawes (director)



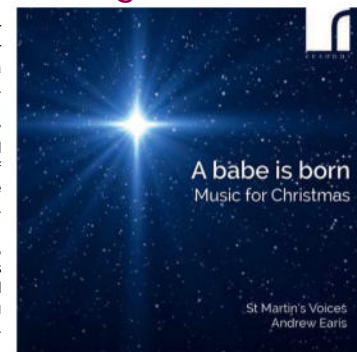
The Spirit of Love: Chamber Music by Ailsa Dixon
Villiers Quartet, Lucy Cox (soprano),
Charlie Draper (ondes Martenot)

This Christmas, St Martin's Voices under director Andrew Earis, brings together eighteen new Christmas choral works by a wide range of contemporary composers.

Telling the story of the nativity, music by Cecilia McDowall & Gabriel Jackson is featured alongside pieces from the next generation of choral composers including Grace-Evangeline Mason and Emily Hazrati among others.

Thoughtfully curated and stylishly performed, these premiere recordings narrate the Christmas story from prophecy to birth, adding fresh material to the festive repertoire and highlighting the ongoing creativity of British choral music.

Coming Soon



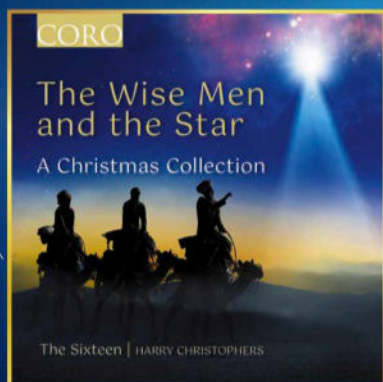
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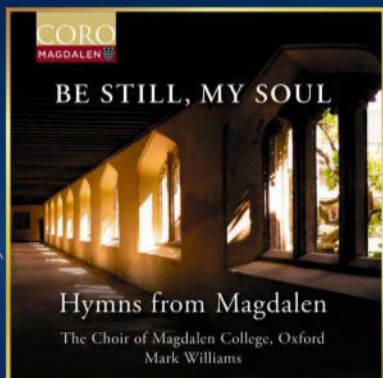
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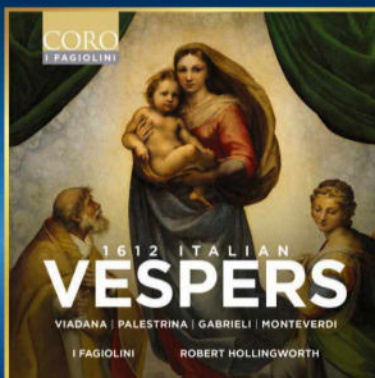
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COR16213



COR16212



www.cororecords.com

Garry Booth enjoys creative clarinet, seductive sax and pensive piano playing

JAZZ CHOICE

Homage to a golden age

Clarinetist Giacomo Smith is connecting the younger generation to a fine jazz tradition



American in London: Smith presents an irresistible concoction



Giacomo Smith

Manouche

Giacomo Smith (clarinet),
Mozes Rosenberg (guitar)
Stunt Records STUCD25042

Giacomo Smith has been a driving force on the UK's live jazz scene since he arrived in London just over a decade ago from New York, ostensibly for an office job but packing his clarinet and alto sax. In 2013 he co-founded the house band for Kansas Smitty's, a jumping jazz joint in Hackney. Since then, his take on golden age jazz through ventures like the Armstrong-inspired Hot Five and The 1925 sextet has connected a younger generation with the tradition.

For *Manouche*, Smith's circled back to a boyhood influence – Hubert Rostaing, Django Reinhardt's '40s clarinetist. With guitarist Mozes Rosenberg in the hot seat beside him, and its 'manouche pump' rhythm section, the quartet's music is drenched in gypsy jazz. But it's far from a tribute act. For a start, the programme comprises reimagined big band classics, augmented by two spicy Smith originals, plus three lesser-known gypsy swing pieces. It's an irresistible concoction, with Smith's sweet-toned lines soaring over Rosenberg's lashing chords and piano-like trills. London is lucky that Smith took to his life here; let's hope we can keep him. ★★★★★

November round-up

Like Giacomo Smith (left), the young Italian soprano saxophonist **Betty Accorsi** came to London as



a conservatoire trained classical player; she transitioned to jazz via further study

at Trinity Laban. *Nature Prints* is Accorsi's third album in five years, in which her reputation as a distinctive composer and soloist has grown. Citing Wayne Shorter as her muse for the new material, Accorsi's delightful songs describe her discoveries of art in nature. Melodic, painterly sax lines are complemented touchingly by her natural, heartfelt singing on numbers like 'Mary' and 'Garden Trip'. Pianist Dan Hewson with Andy Hamill (bass) and Joe Edwards (drums) provide the well sprung transport for Accorsi's poetry in motion. (*Betty Accorsi Music BAMCD0003*) ★★★★★

Winning the inaugural Brubeck Living Legacy Prize helped (London-based) Dutch alto saxophonist **Kasper Rietkerk** make *The Happy Worrier*. He put together a dream team of John Parricelli (guitar), Tom Herbert (bass) and Jonah Evans (drums) who apply their supreme improvising



ability to ten atmospheric compositions. The resulting sound is powerful but restrained,

spacious and gleaming. Rietkerk's lightly held, finely burred alto lines are compelling; Parricelli leans in with assured sensitivity. Guest vocalist Rebecka Edlund contributes a gorgeous, hymnal vocalese on 'Scream For Silence' that's revisited in an experimental bonus track. (*Kasper Rietkerk Records KRRCD001*) ★★★★★

Afro-Cuban jazz emerged in wartime New York with emigres like Machito and Mario Bauzá. Over the intervening 80 years 'cubop' evolved with artists like Dizzy Gillespie and later Arturo Sandoval and Gonzalo Rubalcaba.

On his new album, Havana-born, now Toulouse-based pianist



Harold López-Nussa is looking to the future as well as the past. *Nueva Timba* is a hybrid

production whereby the recording of a club gig by the core quartet (piano, drums, bass and harmonica) was augmented with electronics and beats in the studio. The music's natural vibrancy remains however: the mingled set of updated Cuban standards and original tunes is intoxicating. On Ernesto Lecuona's 'Gitanerias', López-Nussa even reveals his classical chops. (*Blue Note 7834302*) ★★★★★

US tenor saxophonist **Donny McCaslin** was already a sought-after sideman when in 2015 he got the call from David Bowie to power



the backing band for *Blackstar*, the rock icon's extraordinary swansong album. Since then,

McCaslin has carved out an art rock meets jazz niche, with an epic studio-driven soundscape that's designed to blow the mind. *Lullaby For The Lost* doesn't disappoint on that score, McCaslin's keening sax surfing a symphonic tsunami of effects. A strong melodic element throughout the programme makes sure the music exhilarates rather than overwhelms. (*Edition Records EDN1286*) ★★★★★

At the other end of the production spectrum is an understated trio gem from US pianist **Fred**



Hersch. A studio recording – albeit made at the Auditorio Stelio Molo in Lugano – *The Surrounding*

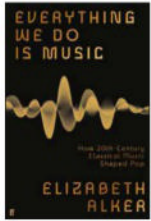
Green is a masterclass in reserved interplay. Hersch has played with bassist Drew Gress and drummer Joey Baron often over the years, but never together. It means that their exploration of three Hersch originals and four uncommon jazz tunes is fresh, revelatory and engrossing. (*ECM 7534291*) ★★★★★

Our critics cast their eyes over the latest selection of books on all things music

Everything We Do Is Music – How 20th-Century Classical Music Shaped Pop

Elizabeth Alker

Faber 304pp (hb) £20



The concept behind Elizabeth Alker's book is spelled out in the subtitle: 'How 20th-Century Classical Music Shaped Pop.' This enormous, potentially unwieldy topic is, however, slimmed down by concentrating on mainly electronic music – and the concepts and technology behind its evolution.

Alker is clearly a fan of these explorations and approaches the topic with a mix of anecdotes, conversations with contemporary composers and excellent historical detail. She starts early in the century and discusses the great thinkers and experimenters, their thirst for progression and their often highly geeky lifestyles. Gleefully borrowing many of the concepts, pop musicians have embraced technology and thinking around the creation of new sonic worlds; some, however, admit to being able to neither play nor tune instruments, leaving the suspicion that new 'movements' have retrospectively been named in order to justify a lack of craft and call it Art.

That said, developments continue, encompassing personal spirituality, the search for transcendence and genuine deep curiosity about the placement of sound in the world. Alker has achieved a scholarly and hugely impressive piece of work.

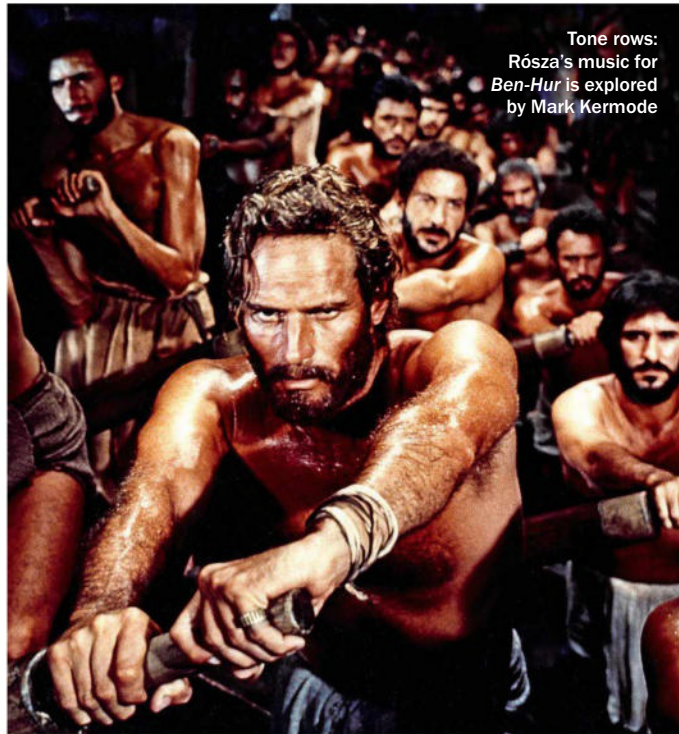
Anne Templer ★★★★★

Mark Kermode's Surround Sound – The Stories of Movie Music

Mark Kermode and Jenny Nelson

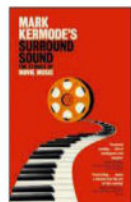
Picador 352pp (hb) £18.99

After several decades as the UK's pre-eminent film critic, Mark Kermode has plenty to say about the film soundtracks that have imprinted on his consciousness. Here, his latest book is a typically



Tone rows: Rósz's music for Ben-Hur is explored by Mark Kermode

enthralled and comprehensive look at the medium. Co-authored with his former Scala Radio producer Jenny Nelson, it's a goldmine for soundtrack obsessives and



newcomers alike. Kermode expertly interlaces the contextual history of film music around his own reminiscences, alighting every now and then on a key film soundtrack that has shaped his artistic tastes. These range from the horror stylings of *The Exorcist* to Anna Meredith's atmospheric *Eighth Grade*.

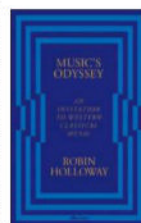
Several noted Hollywood composers including James Newton Howard, Howard Shore and Rachel Portman, lend their fascinating insights throughout. Big names like Hans Zimmer feature prominently. Yet soundtrack fans will be thrilled at Kermode's characteristic deep dive into those marginalised corners, including the pioneering female composers from the Bollywood film industry. The result is a compulsively readable book that

moves with the propulsion of John Williams's *Jaws* while exhibiting all the breadth of Miklós Rósz's *Ben-Hur*. Sean Wilson ★★★★★

Music's Odyssey Robin Holloway

Allen Lane 1,232pp (hb) £35

The title of this enormous tome by composer Robin Holloway promises a rich, all-embracing story of music – 'an invitation', as he puts it, for music lovers to explore Western Classical Music. Sadly, the result is the precise opposite of inviting, as



hundreds of pages of dense, repetitive writing read suspiciously like recycled lecture notes.

Holloway grandly dismisses the need to be 'musicological' and consequently ignores half a century of scholarship (one chapter mentions 'recent discoveries' which date from 1977; most commentators he quotes are long dead). His blow-by-blow accounts of individual pieces are

neither detailed nor elegant enough to bring the music to life – they are, alas, simply boring.

We're marched through a string of compositional 'Great Masters', from c.600 to the present day. Female composers occupy eleven pages (of over 1,150), everyone is white, and discussions of non-Western musical influences on familiar composers are both lazy and offensively archaic. Meanwhile, the text is littered with abstruse poetic quotations, references and puns seemingly designed to bring pleasure to no-one but its writer. A disappointing waste of so many pages. Katy Hamilton ★

Petroc Trelawny's Classical Music Puzzle Book

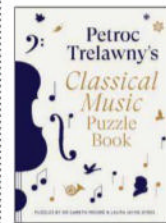
Petroc Trelawny

Ivy Press 192pp (pb) £15.99

The format here is simple: on the left-hand page we get an interesting description of, or anecdote about, a composer; and on the right, a brainteaser related to said composer. And repeat, 79 times.

For his 80 composer portraits, Radio 3's Petroc Trelawny has chosen a pleasingly eclectic range, from the Bachs and Mozarts to less familiar names such as Elfrida Andree and Peggy Glanville-Hicks. Expert puzzle-setters Gareth Moore and Laura Jayne Ayres, meanwhile, are in charge of the brainteasers, some of which require a little classical music knowledge, others none at all.

If you're the sort who spends your time buried in *The Times's* cryptic crossword or super-fiendish Sudokus, I suspect you will not find the puzzles hugely challenging – with the exception of tying myself in knots in the Barbara Strozzi Close Connections teaser, I found most very doable – though all are imaginatively thought out. And for the star rating? Take Tchaikovsky's 'Pathétique' squared and divide by Dvořák's 'New World'. I'll let you work it out. Jeremy Pound



From the archives

Andrew McGregor looks over this month's reissued and live archive recordings

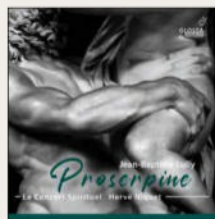
ARCHIVE CHOICE

The joys of spring

Hervé Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel breathe new life into a 17th-century 'climate opera'



Sense of delight:
Hervé Niquet leads
an exceptional cast



Lully

Proserpine

Soloists; Le Concert Spirituel/Hervé Niquet
Glossa GCD921635 149:20 mins (2CD)

Lully's *Proserpine* is a 17th-century 'climate opera' according to the composer's modern evangelist Christophe Rousset. *Proserpine* is the

Roman version of the Greek goddess Persephone, daughter of the fertility goddess Ceres, abducted and married by Pluto the god of the Underworld, plunging the earth into eternal winter. Jupiter intervenes so that *Proserpine* spends half the year with her husband in Hades, and the other half back on earth so that spring can return. The story inspired Lully to begin a new phase in his operas, with more expressive arias and ensembles, fewer dance movements and diversions, more focus on the drama and dialogue. Hervé Niquet and Le Concert Spirituel bring *Proserpine* to life with dramatic immediacy, effortless flow, and a sense of delight in the vivid storytelling and Lully's lyricism. There's also an eloquent Francophone cast, especially Stéphanie d'Oustrac as Ceres, Cyril Auvity's vibrant high tenor, and Salomé Haller sparkling in the title role; recorded after stage performances and it shows. Exemplary Lully, with the field to itself... until Rousset returns from touring *Proserpine* and releases his own recording. ★★★★★

November round-up

Two centuries after Lully's *Proserpine* (left), Richard Wagner rebuilt the Baroque opera house at Bayreuth, where his son Siegfried became assistant conductor in



1894, a decade after his father's death. Taught by his grandfather Liszt, Wagner disciple Engelbert

Humperdinck, and conductors Felix Mottl and Hans Richter, Siegfried's debut *Ring* cycle in 1896 was the first at Bayreuth in 20 years – and 30 years later, with the arrival of electrical recording, he set down these excerpts from his father's operas and an overture of his own. Newly remastered, they're startlingly clear, exposing the frailties of the playing, yet also Siegfried's deep understanding of the music, including the famous *Siegfried Idyll* that was his birthright. (SOMM ARIADNE5043) ★★★

For some pianophiles *Alfred Cortot* is the 20th century's greatest French pianist, but if you're new to



Cortot's Chopin recordings from 1940s Paris you may wonder why, confronted by slips and

imperfections from the first bars of the Op. 10 *Études*. Then you realise you're still listening... you've fallen under Cortot's spell, bewitched by the poetry, the mercurial virtuosity, the sheer spontaneity in these unedited first takes. Here, we have the complete *Études, Preludes and Waltzes*, and the rare bonus of the B minor Piano Sonata No. 3 from London in 1931 in pretty good sound. There's plenty of note-perfect Chopin elsewhere, but not often this kind of alchemy. (Apr-6046) ★★★

At the 1978 Edinburgh Festival veteran Russian conductor *Yevgeny Svetlanov* stood in for André Previn with the London Symphony Orchestra, and in Rimsky-Korsakov's *Scheherazade* the energy

and elemental immediacy suggests they were on their toes. John Georgiadis supplying voluptuous violin solos, and Svetlanov unleashing the LSO brass in a tempestuous shipwreck. There was turbulence around Svetlanov's visit to Edinburgh with his own USSR State Symphony Orchestra a decade



earlier. Soviet troops invaded Prague just days before, there were demonstrations on Princes Street

and agitation in the Usher Hall, but generous applause greets an electrifying performance of Glinka's *Symphony on Two Russian Themes* in these vivid BBC recordings. (ICAC5186) ★★★★★

The Polish-born violinist *Ida Haendel* had a remarkable 60-year career, studying with Carl Flesch and Enescu in the '30s, and hugely popular at the Proms in London, 68 performances ending with the Britten Violin Concerto in 1994. Haendel played the Brahms Concerto for the first time as a nine year-old at the Proms in 1938 with Sir Henry Wood; four decades later with Gennady Rozhdestvensky, everything snaps into focus with Haendel's first entry and the breadth and beauty of her playing, cheered to the rafters by the Proms audience. Haendel's Sibelius recording with



Paavo Berglund in 1975 is one of her most celebrated, and at the Proms six years later there's

a brooding power and rapport that's compelling. The Elgar Concerto at the BBC's Maida Vale Studios with Sir Adrian Boult in 1971 is as poised and noble as you could wish for... then that final Proms Britten, played in front of the late Queen, Andrew Davis creating the atmospheric soundscape, Haendel soaring with searing sweetness to the heartbreakingly melancholy ending. You'll wish you'd been there... I was, unforgettable. (ICAC5185) ★★★★★



Andrew McGregor is the presenter of Radio 3's *Record Review*, broadcast each Saturday afternoon from 2pm-4pm



Song in his heart:
Andreas Scholl marks a
longstanding partnership
with Harmonia Mundi

◀ Unboxed

This month's round-up features multi-decade collections from performers at peak power

The Art of Andreas Scholl (HMX2904131.36) offers a welcome chance to dive into the back catalogue of one of today's leading countertenors. It was 30 years ago that Scholl first recorded for Harmonia Mundi, releasing an album of German Baroque songs that forms the first of six CDs included in this new set. An album of German Baroque cantatas nods to his home country, but Scholl also turns his attention to English repertoire, and the master of melancholy, John Dowland. Two albums dedicated to Handel, exploring famous arias and scenes, make this a wonderful celebration of Scholl's artistry.

Mikhail Pletnev might be, as the liner note describes him, a 'mad genius, free electron of rigour, serious prankster, facetious tragedian, concentrated eccentric'. But the Russian pianist's musical credentials are far less elusive, as **Mikhail Pletnev: The Erato Recordings (1988-2001)** (2173266139) demonstrates, in a rich selection of albums from his time with Virgin Classics (now Erato). They journey from Scarlatti's sonatas via Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven through to Chopin and Brahms, before turning to the Russians, with Mussorgsky, Tchaikovsky, Scriabin and Rachmaninov. As well as showcasing Pletnev the pianist, there's space for him as a conductor, directing his Russian National Orchestra.

Warner Classics has gone all out to mark Itzhak Perlman's 80th birthday, releasing a 78-CD set titled **Itzhak Perlman The Complete Warner Classics Edition** (2173261993). It's a treasure trove of recordings from this elder statesman of the violin, whose career has garnered him 16 Grammys. There are examples from the concerto repertoire, from full-toned JS Bach and Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* to blockbuster Bruch and rarer Korngold, Ben-Haim and Goldmark. Chamber music figures prominently, including duos with pianist Vladimir Ashkenazy and violinist Pinchas Zukerman, as well as trios with cellist Lynn Harrell. He's joined by pianist Martha Argerich for two discs of live performances. And for a final flourish, there are encores by Kreisler, rags by Scott Joplin and songs with Plácido Domingo. **Rebecca Franks**

New Exciting CDs!

Beyond Schubert Vol 1 (dBCD219)

Peter Friis Johansson | Piano Sonatas by Franz Schubert & Elfrida Andrée



In the series *Beyond Schubert*, pianist Peter Friis Johansson not only plays Schubert's sonatas from his manuscripts and even completes unfinished works, but also combines some of them with related works by Swedish composers. On this album:

Franz Schubert: Sonata in A Minor D. 845
Elfrida Andrée: Sonata in A Major Op. 3
Franz Schubert: Sonata in A Major D. 664

Release date: 17 October 2025

Alfvén | Complete Orchestral Songs (dBCD218)

Göteborg Opera Orchestra/Ringborg | Avemo, Bisholt, Westman, Fredriksson



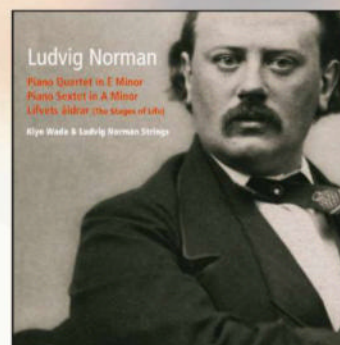
American Record Guide

"The 4 singers are all excellent ... at whatever level of complexity [the songs] are all performed very well under Ringborg's direction. I am very glad this recording came my way. It opened me up to a composer I had heretofore disregarded."

R Moore, American Record Guide

Ludvig Norman | Chamber Works (dBCD217)

Piano Quartet/Piano Sextet/Solo Pieces | Kiyo Wada & Ludvig Norman Strings



"It is sad that Norman's music is not played more often."

Svenska Dagbladet



Swedish Radio P2, Music Review

"It is a beautiful album with an obvious joy of new discoveries"

The Record Geijutsu Online

dB Productions' albums are distributed physically and digitally worldwide by Naxos and its partners.



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Audio

Our expert *Chris Haslam* gives advice on buying the latest hi-fi equipment

Best value bookshelf speakers for your budget



Before Spotify took over, the stereo speaker market was awash with great-value passive designs to complement your amplifier, turntable and CD player. That field has shrunk, but the quality is arguably better than ever. I'm focussing on bookshelf speakers under £500 this month, which I appreciate is loose change to some audiophiles and a significant investment to casual listeners. But let me assure you, pound-for-pound, these passive speakers – with no need for their own power supply – will, when paired with a similarly priced amp, sound superior to all but the most extravagant one-box system.

Bookshelf speakers, also called standmounts, are a compact way to enjoy serious hi-fi. Typically measuring around 25-35cm tall, they're designed for small- to medium-sized rooms and usually feature a two-way design with a tweeter (often a 1" soft dome) and a mid/bass woofer (4-7"). It's worth looking for designs that include front or rear ports to make the most of lower bass frequencies,

but getting the best from your speakers will require accurate placement. Yes, ironically, the bookshelf is about the least suitable place for a bookshelf speaker.

I've included a series of tips (right) on how to position your speakers at home, and trust me, something as simple as angling each speaker

Bookshelf speakers, or standmounts, are a compact way to enjoy serious hi-fi

towards your favourite seat makes a huge difference. But the biggest impact you can make is to pair them with stands. Try Richer Sounds (richersounds.com) for a great selection.

If stands aren't an option, a solid sideboard or table will be OK, but try to avoid pushing them hard into corners or against the wall, as this often muddies bass response due to the small volume of the cabinets.

At the top of our budget this month is the

gorgeous **KEF Q1 Meta** (£499, uk.kef.com).

These compact speakers feature the 12th-gen Uni-Q drivers, which place the tweeter within the mid/bass driver for exceptional clarity. But our favourite new budget speaker has to be the **DALI Kupid** (£299, dali-speakers.com), which offers the looks of a funky streaming speaker, with proper hi-fi pedigree.

Q Acoustics has long championed the cash-strapped audiophile, and their new 3000c collection is hard to ignore, but if you're hunting for absolute bargains, the old-but-wise **Mission LX-2 MKII** (£219, mission.co.uk) still impresses, as does the **ELAC Debut B5.2** (£209, elac.com), which is easily positioned thanks to the front-firing bass port.

When it comes to pairing your affordable speakers with a suitable amplifier, the brands do try to make it as simple as possible. Most budget speakers have 8-ohm impedance with sensitivity around 85-88dB, making them easy to pair with the majority of similarly priced amplifiers. The **Wharfedale Diamond 12.1**

Simple controls:
the Wharfedale
Diamond 12.1



has an 88dB sensitivity, which is mercifully easy to drive.

As a general rule, choose an amplifier whose RMS (Root Mean Square) power output per channel is between 75 and 150 per cent of the speakers' RMS power rating. So, speakers with an RMS power rating of 80 watts each need an amplifier with between 60 watts (75%) and 120 watts (150%) RMS per channel.

And finally, a word on running your speakers from Alex Munro, brand director of Q Acoustics: 'Speakers have moving parts to drive the acoustic waves we hear as music. It can take several days for a loudspeaker to reach room temperature, so we recommend at least 24 hours of normal use for the drivers to loosen up and perform as the designer intended.'



Serious style and proper pedigree: our favourite new budget speaker, the delightful DALI Kupid

Positioning tips

Distance from walls: Place speakers at least 20-30cm from rear walls to prevent bass boom, especially for rear-ported models. Front-ported speakers can be placed closer to walls.

Toe-in: Angle speakers slightly toward the listening position to enhance stereo imaging and focus. A 10-30 degree toe-in is typical.

Height and stands: For bookshelf speakers, use dedicated stands to position tweeters at ear level, typically 90-100cm off the floor.

Equilateral triangle: Form a triangle between the speakers and your listening position: 2-3m between speakers for the widest soundstage.

Room acoustics: Avoid hard surfaces between speakers and listener to avoid audio reflections. Rugs or curtains can dampen unwanted echoes.

We recommend...

Perfect entry-point:
Q Acoustics 3010c is
a tempting package



Wharfedale Diamond 12.1

£249

Founded in 1932 by Gilbert Briggs in Yorkshire, Wharfedale was one of the pioneers of two-way speaker design. The original Diamond collection was a huge hit in the 1980s, bringing audiophile quality to a wider audience, and they've continued to refine them ever since. Generation 12.1 maintains this pedigree, with price-defying audio quality and great looks (in four stylish colours, measuring 31x18x28cm). Listening to Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto No. 3*, streamed via Qobuz using the Marantz M1 (£900, marantz.com), I'm taken by the definition of the strings, while the tweeter controls the upper register without harshness. They're more of a loafer than a running shoe, offering comfort and listenability rather than pace and precision, but I think that's ideal for a budget speaker that needs to sound its best whichever amp it's plugged into. wharfedale.co.uk

Q Acoustics 3010c £299

Billed as 'the perfect entry-point into a modern audiophile world', Q Acoustics' new 3000c collection has five designs, including two standmount speakers, a floorstander and even a centre channel for home cinema use. The 3010c is the cheapest, smallest offering (254x155x251mm), but features the same C3 Continuous Curved Cone configuration found on the brand's premium offerings. This smoother cone design helps minimise distortion and produce a



An absolute bargain: the Cambridge SX50 is small, but surprisingly robust and warm

clear sound. Combined with rigid cabinetry, lovely finishes and premium components it's a tempting package, and can slip easily into even the most cluttered of rooms. If you have more space, the larger options in the range will give a fuller sound, and the FS50 stands (£175) will enhance the quality further. qacoustics.co.uk

Cambridge SX50 £149

An absolute bargain from Cambridge – and despite being around for over a decade, they still sound great in my office. At 225x161x240mm and featuring a 135mm paper cone woofer and 25mm silk tweeter, they're undeniably small, but as such slot discretely just about anywhere. For such a small speaker they have a surprisingly robust output, with plenty of warmth, smooth mid-range and enough bass for a small room. I wouldn't choose them for a larger living room or big airy spaces, but for closer listening – like a teenager's bedroom or home office – you'll be surprised by their clarity and detail. As with all speakers, however, placement is key and giving these a little more space, away from the wall, returns better sonics. cambridgeaudio.com

Price-defying quality: Wharfedale Diamond 12.1 remains a winner

TV&Radio

Your guide to what's on BBC Radio 3 this month, plus TV highlights



NOVEMBER'S RADIO 3 LISTINGS

Schedules may be subject to alteration. For up-to-date listings see BBC Sounds and iPlayer

Centenary tribute:
Radio 3 celebrates
Charles Mackerras

Three to look out for



Let there be light:
James MacMillan
explores the creation



Sam Jackson, the controller of BBC Radio 3, selects three programme highlights for the month of November

Mackerras Day

Radio 3 marks conductor Sir Charles Mackerras's centenary with a day celebrating his legacy – from his championing of music by Czech composers to the operas of Mozart and the comic genius of Gilbert and Sullivan. We'll hear the best of his recordings, and, from the BBC archives, Mackerras himself talking about the music he loved.

Monday 17 November, all day

James Blades: One-Man Band

James Anthony-Rose (*All Creatures Great and Small*) takes listeners on a journey through the life and work of James Blades, one of the most accomplished percussionists of the 20th century. On stage at Snape Maltings, Blades performs an array of instruments and shares a wealth of anecdotes.

Sunday Feature, Sunday 23 November, 7.15pm

In the Beginning

James MacMillan explores how the creation story from the Book of Genesis has shaped classical music through the ages. Across six episodes, he's joined by leading theological and musical guests who explore different aspects of the creation, unpacking how composers have responded to its themes of chaos, light and darkness, the cosmos and life on earth.

Music Matters, Saturday 29 November, 1pm

1 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters The Royal Collection
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music

2 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears Saxophone and Swan
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11.30pm Ultimate Calm
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

3 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Michael Haydn
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Royal Festival Hall, London. Abrahamsen *Let me tell you*, Mahler *Symphony No. 4*. Jennifer France (soprano), LPO/Edward Gardner
9.45-10pm The Essay Empty Spaces
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

4 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week

Michael Haydn
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Brangwyn Hall, Swansea. Shostakovich *Violin Concerto No. 1*; *Symphony No. 7*. Clara-Jumi Kang (violin), BBC NOW/Ryan Bancroft
9.45-10pm The Essay Empty Spaces
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

5 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Michael Haydn
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm In Concert
9.45-10pm The Essay Empty Spaces
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

6 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Michael Haydn
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Brangwyn Hall, Swansea. Vaughan Williams *Overture: The Wasps*, Mägi *Bukoolika*, Grime *Trumpet Concerto 'night-sky blue'*, Nielsen *Symphony No. 4 'The Inextinguishable'*. Matilda Lloyd (trumpet), BBC National Orchestra of Wales/Arvo Volmer
9.45-10pm The Essay Empty Spaces
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

7 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Michael Haydn
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Empty Spaces
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

8 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters Piano Stories
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music



9 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature
 Poets Who Can't Write
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11pm Ultimate Calm
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am
 Unclassified

10 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Elfrida Andrée
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape

7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In

Concert from DR Koncerthuset, Copenhagen. Mahler *Symphony No. 8*. Liv Redpath, Valentina Farcas (sops), David Butt Philip (tenor), DR Concert Choir, BBC Singers, DR Symphony Orchestra/Fabio Luisi
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

11 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Elfrida Andrée
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In
Concert from Queen's Hall, Edinburgh. Corelli *Concerto Grossos, Op. 6, Nos 6 & 7*, Vivaldi *Concerto for Two Violins, RV514*; *Concerto for Two Violins*

and Cello, RV565 Muffat *Sonata V 'Armonico Tributo'*, JS Bach *Concerto for 2 Violins, BWV1043*. Matthew Truscott (violin), Huw Daniel (violin), Dunedin Consort/John Butt
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

12 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Elfrida Andrée
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In
Concert from Royal Festival Hall, London. Sibelius *Scènes historiques: Suite No. 2*; *The Oceanides*; Vaughan Williams *A Sea Symphony*. Masabane Cecilia Rangwanasha (sop),

David Stout (bar), London Philharmonic Chorus, LPO / Mark Elder

9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

13 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Elfrida Andrée
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In
Concert live from Royal Festival Hall, London. Mahler *Symphony No. 7*. Philharmonia/Jakub Hruša
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

14 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Elfrida Andrée
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

15 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters
 Piano Stories
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music

16 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Sunday Feature
 Great Ancient Egyptian Musical Mystery
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11pm Ultimate Calm
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am
 Unclassified

17 MONDAY

BBC RADIO 3 CHOICE 6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Wagner
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In
Concert from The Lighthouse, Poole. Wagner *Das Liebesverbot Overture*, Howard Saxophone Concerto, Berlioz *Symphonie fantastique*. Jess Gillam (saxophone), Bournemouth SO / Mark Wigglesworth
9.45-10pm The Essay Opera on a Plate
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

18 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week
 Wagner



In good voice:
Natalya Romaniw
performs at the
Gala spectacular

TV CHOICE Cardiff Singer of the World

One of the world's most prestigious international opera competitions, the biennial BBC Cardiff Singer of the World was founded in 1983, and has been a launchpad for the careers of some of the world's major stars. But due to ongoing renovations to the competition's home venue of St David's Hall, it's had to take a hiatus and promises to return in 2027.

Until then, you can still get your fix of ball gowns and *bel canto* (for one-night only) with this autumn's Gala spectacular, recorded at the Wales Millennium Centre's exquisite Donald Gordon Theatre. It will feature a line-up of world-class Cardiff competitors from across the years, including Natalya Romaniw, Katarina Karnéus, Ilker Arcayürek and Catriona Morison, with full orchestral accompaniment from the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Don't miss what promises to be a dazzling showcase of some of the most beautiful music written for the human voice.

BBC Four and iPlayer, from Friday 7 November

5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Bridgewater Hall, Manchester. Debussy *La Mer*, Howard *Trombone Concerto*, Mahler *Symphony No. 1*. Peter Moore (trombone), BBC Philharmonic/Elena Schwarz
9.45-10pm The Essay Opera on a Plate
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

19 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics

1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Wagner
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from City Halls, Glasgow. Strauss *Metamorphosen*, MacMillan *Veni, Veni Emmanuel*, Beethoven *Symphony No. 5*. Colin Currie (perc), SCO/Emelyanychev
9.45-10pm The Essay Opera on a Plate
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

20 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Wagner
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Williams *Ballades*, Fisher *Violin Concerto*, Sempé *The Gates*, Wolfe *Pretty*. Geneva Lewis (vn), BBC NOW/Childress
9.45-10pm The Essay Opera on a Plate
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

21 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Wagner
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45 Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Opera on a Plate
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

22 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm Music Matters Piano Stories
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music

23 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm CHOICE 7.15-8pm Sunday Feature
James Blades – Pandemonium of the One-Man Band
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11pm Ultimate Calm
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

24 MONDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast

9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-2pm Live from Wigmore Hall
2-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Max Roach
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Assembly Rooms, Bath. Works by Mozart, Haydn, Ravel, Debussy, Weber. Annelien van Wauwe (cl), Elizaveta Ivanova (fl), Sally Pryce (hp), Kleio Quartet
9.45-10pm The Essay Accompanying Austen
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

25 TUESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Max Roach
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Hoddinott Hall, Cardiff. Schumann *Four Marches, Op. 76*, Finzi *Clarinet Concerto*, Franck *Symphony in D minor*. Nick Carpenter (clarinet), BBC NOW/Gergely Madaras
9.45-10pm The Essay Accompanying Austen
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

26 WEDNESDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-3pm Classical Live
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Composer of the Week Max Roach
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert live from City Halls, Glasgow. Works by MacMillan, Whyte, Rachmaninov. Stephanie Gonley (violin), BBC SSO/Martyn Brabbins
9.45-10pm The Essay Accompanying Austen
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

27 THURSDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Max Roach
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Radio 3 In Concert from Liverpool Philharmonic Hall. Works by

Copland, Britten, Simon, Ravel. Simone Lamsma (violin), RLPO/Alpesh Chauhan
9.45-10pm The Essay Accompanying Austen
10-11.30pm Night Tracks
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

28 FRIDAY

6.30-9.30am Breakfast
9.30am-1pm Essential Classics
1-4pm Classical Live
4-5pm Composer of the Week Max Roach
5-7pm In Tune
7-7.30pm Classical Mixtape
7.30-9.45pm Friday Night is Music Night
9.45-10pm The Essay Accompanying Austen
10-11.30pm Late Junction
11.30pm-12.30am 'Round Midnight

29 SATURDAY

6.30-9am Saturday Breakfast
9am-12noon Saturday Morning
12-1pm Earlier... with Jools Holland
1-2pm CHOICE 1-2pm Music Matters In the Beginning
2-4pm Record Review
4-5pm Sound of Cinema
5-6pm This Classical Life
6-9.30pm Opera on 3
9.30-10.30pm Music Planet
10.30pm-12.30am New Music

30 SUNDAY

6.30-9am Sunday Breakfast
9am-12pm Sunday Morning
12-1.30pm Private Passions
1.30-3pm Music Map
3-4pm Choral Evensong
4-5pm Jazz Record Requests
5-6pm The Early Music Show
6-7.15pm Words and Music
7.15-8pm Between the Ears A Hymn to Water
8-9pm Brass Banding
9-10pm 20th Century Radicals
10-11pm Ultimate Calm
11-11.30pm Night Tracks Mix
11.30pm-12.30am Unclassified

QUIZ ANSWERS from p 104

- George Gershwin
- Oliver Knussen
- Oxford
- Ludwig Köchel
- Carl Orff
- Kiri Te Kanawa
- Ocarina
- 'Kreutzer' Sonata (Violin Sonata No. 9 in A major)
- Ozzy Osbourne
- a) Klingsor; b) Kostelnička (Buryjovka); c) Krol Roger, or King Roger

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THE QUIZ

We hope you do OK at this month's little tester...

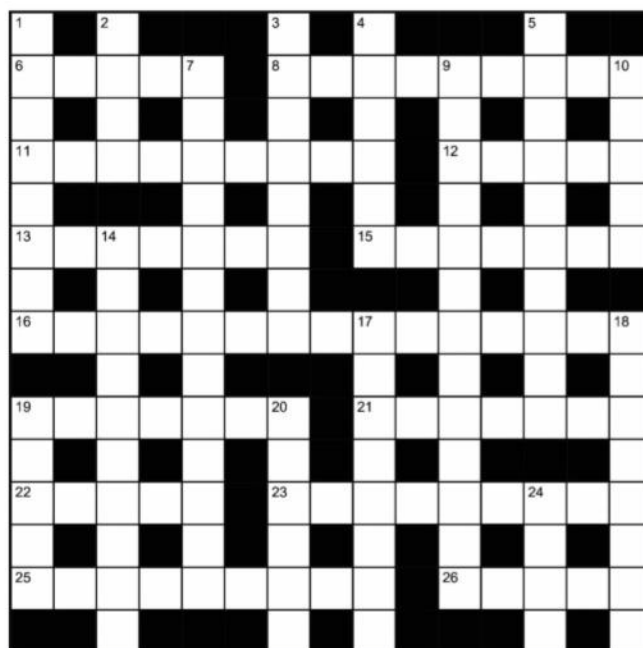
1. Which composer's musical *Oh, Kay!* opened on Broadway in 1926?
 2. Who composed the Maurice Sendak-inspired operas *Where the Wild Things Are* (1983) and *Higglety Pigglety Pop!* (1985)?
 3. Conducted by the composer after he had received an honorary doctorate, Haydn's Symphony No. 92 is known by what nickname?
 4. Name the Austrian musicologist and publisher under whose catalogue Mozart's compositions were assigned the K (or KV) numbers we still use today.
 5. Often played on the xylophones and other percussion, whose 1920s work *Gassenhauer nach Hans Neusiedler* (1536) has appeared in films including *Badlands* and *True Romance*?
 6. Who sang the role of Maria alongside José Carreras's Tony in Leonard Bernstein's 1984 recording of his own *West Side Story*?
 7. With a history believed to date back to at least 10,000 years, the instrument above makes a rare appearance in Ligeti's Violin Concerto. What is it?
 8. Which 1803 work by Beethoven gave its nickname to an 1889 novella by Tolstoy which, in turn, was used by Janáček as the subtitle of his String Quartet No. 1 (1923)?
 9. The video for which heavy metal singer's 1984 single 'So Tired' sees him appearing on the opera stage, complete with an orchestra covered in cobwebs?
 10. Name the following operatic 'K's: a) the evil magician in Wagner's *Parsifal*; b) the well-meaning but misguided mother-in-law in Janáček's *Jenůfa*; c) the title character of an opera by Szymanowski, premiered in 1926.
- See p102 for answers*

The *BBC Music Magazine* PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 417

Crossword set by Paul Henderson



The first correct solution of our crossword picked at random will win an exclusive **BBC Music Magazine Coffee Mug** (not available to purchase). To enter, send answers to: *BBC Music Magazine*, Crossword 417/ Nov 2025, PO Box 501, Leicester, LE94 0AA to arrive by 30 October 2025 (solution in January 2026 issue).



Your name & address

.....

.....

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.....

AUGUST SOLUTION No. 414



AUGUST WINNER *Tim Mayell, Beaconsfield*

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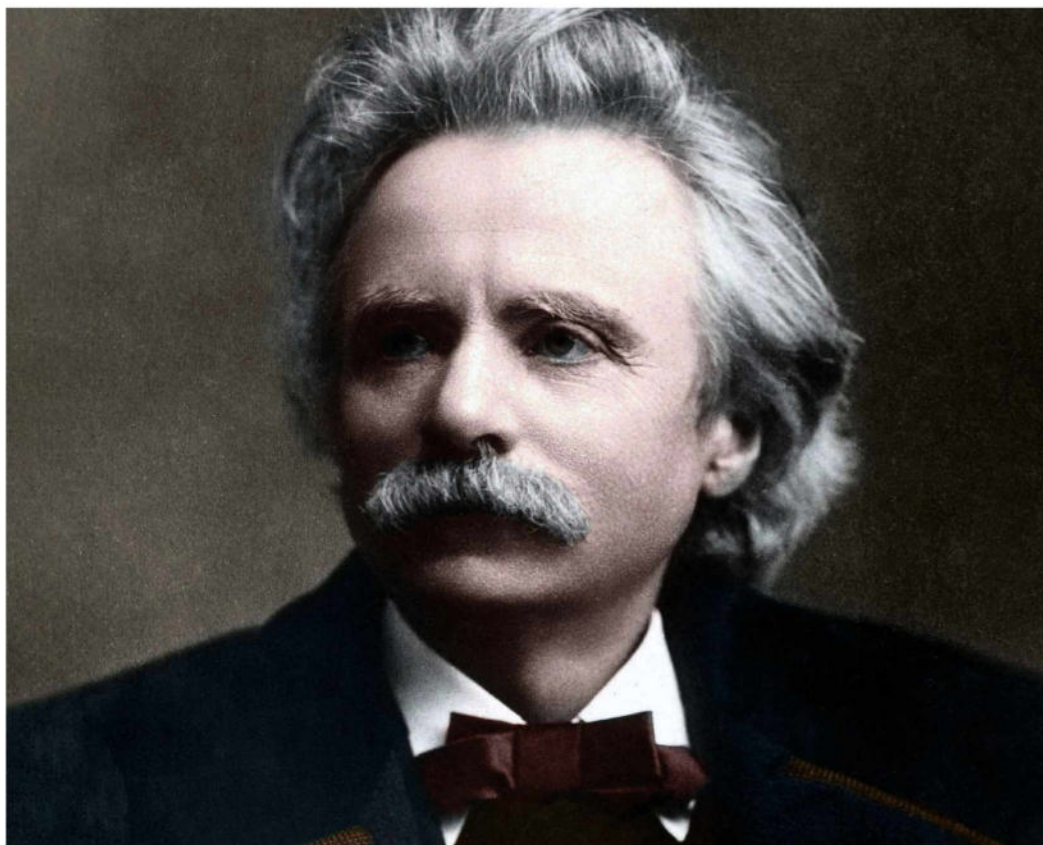
ACROSS

- 6 Italian composer's first music for player-piano? (5)
- 8 A company, American – it's accommodating college sound design (9)
- 11 Court directive initially to obstruct percussion instrument (9)
- 12 Good range shown by musical lexicographer (5)
- 13 As the waltz was once viewed: eternal, timeless (7)
- 15 English composer in Spain, hugged by top performer (7)
- 16 American composer lecturer slung out, twice interrupted by source of heckling (7,8)
- 19 Remarkably dear and uncommon component of audio equipment (7)
- 21 Musical work, nonet, brought back with good overture (7)
- 22 Violinist, mostly full-toned, I caught in comeback (5)
- 23 Pop performer's version of Elgar incorporating strongly rhythmic music (9)
- 25 I rig solo awkwardly, including end of piece in churchy style? (9)
- 26 Start to play in middle of Bernstein, having missed opening (5)

DOWN

- 1 Toasting the inspiration for an Ives overture? (8)
- 2 Singer trapped by unconventional tonality (4)
- 3 Barcarolle regularly involving seasonal singer (8)
- 4 Dance step engaging people ignoring initial dances (6)
- 5 King getting one Italian composer to include new instrumental passages (10)
- 7 All leaving London venue, perhaps – wrong for Britten opera (6,7)
- 9 Quality time captured in form of genius opening music? (9,4)
- 10 Conduct pieces that are quite popular in their finales? (5)
- 14 No miracles when playing flattened mode? (5,5)
- 17 Church singer? Church spirit elevated old and young initially (8)
- 18 Season-ticket holders? Mostly sure with Elgar, possibly (8)
- 19 Mistake turning up in chamber or recording-studio? (5)
- 20 I'm upset over grand French refusal to stage French opera (6)
- 24 Japanese instrument is knockout as well? Not entirely (4)

Please note: Because of *BBC Music Magazine's* limited office access, there may be a delay in receiving your prize. We apologise for any inconvenience caused.



NEXT MONTH on sale from 30 October (UK)

Grieg's *Peer Gynt*

From morning moods to mountain kings, *Terry Blain* celebrates 150 years of the Norwegian composer's incidental music to Ibsen's play



Grieg *Piano Concerto*, *Holberg Suite* & *Lyric Pieces*

Performed by pianist Paul Lewis, the BBC Symphony Orchestra and BBC National Orchestra of Wales

PLUS! *Stephen Johnson* explores **Franz Schubert**; we recommend the best recordings of **Rachmaninov's Second Piano Concerto**; pianist **Mariam Batsashvili** speaks exclusively to *Michael Church*; and *Claire Jackson* explores the role of **music competitions** in 2025



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Eleanor Oldroyd

Broadcaster

Having joined the BBC in 1986, Eleanor Oldroyd has become well known as the presenter of radio programmes including Radio 1's *Newsbeat* and *5 Live Sport*, and is perhaps most familiar to many as the voice of 5 Live's cricket coverage. She commented for BBC Radio on the funeral of the Duke of Edinburgh and the Coronation of Charles III and Camilla, and has also presented programmes on choral music for Radio 3. Her book *Composers of Barnes: The Flow of Inspiration* was published in 2016.

Music was always on at home. Both my parents sang – my mum was an alto and my dad was a tenor – and my dad was a vicar at the parish church in Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire where, along with my two brothers, I sang in the choir from the age of eight or nine. I also learnt the piano to a level where I could pick up a book of pieces and enjoy playing them to myself and briefly took up the flute too, but it was the choral singing that really stayed with me.

When I went for my interview at Girton College, Cambridge, I met and became friends with Ysenda Maxtone Graham, who is now an author. She also loved choral music, and I remember going to her house and sitting in her bedroom listening to **ALLEGRI's** *Miserere*, sung by King's College Choir under David Willcocks – I could scarcely believe that any human could produce the purity of Roy Goodman's soaring voice as the treble soloist. When we then went up to Cambridge, we went pretty regularly to evensong at King's.

During my time at university I went interrailing, which involved staying in grotty youth hostels where you were lucky even to have a shower. After a month of that, I remember coming home, dumping my washing, getting in a bath, putting on my cassette of **MOZART's** Piano Concerto No. 21 and thinking 'Thank goodness I'm home!'. It is still one of those pieces that,



‘Commentating on the Coronation for radio was beyond any experience I’ve had’

when I put it on, my shoulders drop, I breathe in and everything seems easier. If I were to go to the proverbial desert island and take only one composer, I think it would be Mozart. There's so much variety – the piano music, the chamber works and so on – and he spans that amazing range from bright and sparkly to the dark moments of the Requiem and his operas.

Something that has been a constant throughout my life is listening on Christmas Eve to the Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College on the radio. I'll do anything to make sure I don't miss it. Four years ago, when I was covering the Ashes cricket in Australia, I was asleep when the service was broadcast live, but then listened to it later on BBC Sounds, walking around the botanic gardens in Melbourne on a sunny Christmas Day. One piece that is bliss to sing if you are

with the right choir is **HOWELLS's** *A Spotless Rose* – it is so redolent of the build-up to Christmas and that sense of wonder.

One of the hardest periods to be a news journalist was during Covid. This was the story that never stopped, was so relentless and so exhausting. The pandemic cut short the 2020 Barnes Music Festival, which I am involved with, and the 2021 event was a small, socially distanced affair. When the festival returned to normal in 2022, it started off with Tallis's anthem 'Why fum'th in fight' followed by **VAUGHAN WILLIAMS's** *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*. The power of communal listening felt so special, and it was a great bit of programming. It was so moving, and seemed to mark the end of what had been an unbelievably stressful time.

Commentating on the Coronation for BBC Radio was beyond any experience I'd ever had. Though we had scripted and rehearsed for the occasion intensely, when **HANDEL's** *Zadok the Priest* began, I was so overwhelmed by the gloriousness of the music that I slowed down to the point that my producer could see that I had too many words and not enough bars to fit them in before the choir came in. He had to warn me to stop talking, but thankfully, I managed to reach the end of a sentence just in time! That same service also featured a new work by the composer Roxanna Panufnik, a good friend of mine, which I loved. I was so proud of her.

I would love to be able to get back into playing the piano again – just to be able to sit down and pick up, say, some Bach, Mozart, Chopin waltzes or Scott Joplin and have a good old bash. I can still almost play from memory the C major Prelude and Fugue from **JS BACH's** *Well-Tempered Clavier* and the following C minor Prelude and Fugue was something I taught myself. I love the contrast between the C major which has this great tranquillity and the C minor which is so frenetic. I still have them in a rather battered book sitting at home, but sadly don't currently have a piano! 🎹

Interview by Jeremy Pound

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Sat 4 Oct

Aurora Orchestra

Music of Mahler and Richard Ayres

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London Piano Festival

with Ingrid Fliter, Sir Stephen Hough, Charles Owen, Katya Apekisheva and many more

Sat 18 Oct

Black Lives in Music presents

Classically Black

with Pete Letanka, Dr Kadiatu Kanneh-Mason, Sabi Ensemble, Simmy Singh, The Jollof House Party Opera, Paulette Bayley, Amina Hussain, Amanda Baldwin and Rianna Henriques

Sun 19 Oct

The Hermes Experiment

Tree – Album Launch

Sat 25 – Sun 26 Oct

IGF London Guitar Festival

with Gonçalo Maia Caetano, Ana Vidovic, Duo Cantelina and Duo Corde Brillanti

Thu 6 Nov

Lotte Betts-Dean

Voice Electric

Fri 7 Nov

The House of Bedlam

To Valerie Solanas and Marilyn Monroe

Sun 9 Nov

Colin Currie & The King's Singers

Sat 15 Nov

Britten Sinfonia

Opus Horizons

Wed 19 Nov

VOCES8 & Carducci Quartet

The Lost Birds

Sat 29 Nov

Solem Quartet

Towards Silence
Music of Max Richter, Cassandra Miller, Meredith Monk and more

Fri 5 Dec

Zubin Kanga

Philip Venables
Answer Machine Tape (1987)

Sat 13 Dec

Nicolas Altstaedt and The Carice Singers

An Ode to Our Planet

Sat 24 Jan

Attacca Quartet

Music of Mendelssohn, Ortiz & Crumb

Sat 31 Jan

Colin Currie Quartet

Music of Reich, Joe Duddell, Volans and more

Fri 20 Feb

The Brodsky Quartet & Sir Willard White

Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment

Bach, the Universe & Everything
Sun 26 Oct, 30 Nov, 14 Dec, 25 Jan, 22 Feb, 22 Mar

I Fagiolini at Kings Place

Thu 11 Dec – Christmas with I Fagiolini
Thu 26 Mar – Victoria String Quartet
Sun 31 May – Purcell: Dido & Aeneas

Kirkman Concerts presents...

Mon 13 Oct – Apollo's Cabinet
Mon 3 Nov – Eden Agranat Meged
Mon 24 Nov – Regency String Quartet
Mon 19 Jan – Astatine Trio

Neave Trio

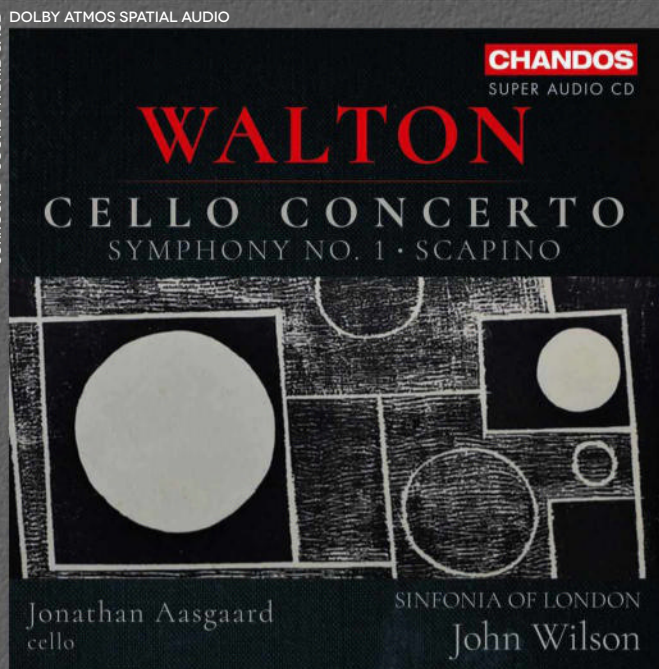
Thu 12 Feb – Musical Remembrances
Fri 13 Feb – Piazzolla: Four Seasons of Buenos Aires

Photo: Attacca Quartet © Monika S. Jakubowska

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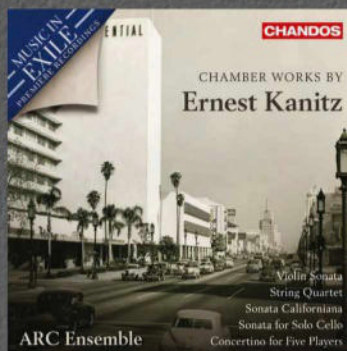


RECORDING OF THE MONTH WALTON: CELLO CONCERTO SYMPHONY NO. 1 | SCAPINO

Jonathan Aasgaard | Sinfonia of London | John Wilson

Sinfonia of London's second album of Walton opens with the overture *Scapino*, which is followed by the Cello Concerto, featuring Jonathan Aasgaard as soloist. The First Symphony was largely inspired by the composer's tempestuous love affair with the widowed Baroness Imma von Doernberg, whom Walton met in 1929 and with whom he was living on the Continent in the early 1930s. Although the work was long in gestation, with a particular delay in the composition of the finale, the result was universally acclaimed as an outstanding success.

CHSA 5328



CHAMBER WORKS BY ERNEST KANITZ ARC Ensemble; Wallace Halladay Anna Štuba | Joel Quarrington

Born into a wealthy Viennese family, Kanitz escaped Austria for the USA in 1938. He became an established educator and composer, with successful premières given by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony & many others. Following his death his music, like that of so many émigré composers, was forgotten.

CHAN 20374

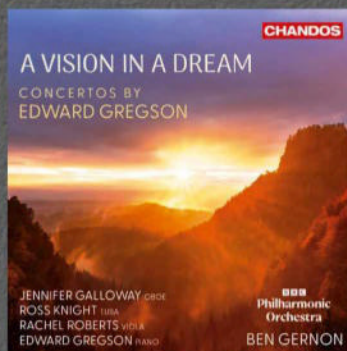


LOUIS LORTIE PLAYS CHOPIN, VOL. 8

Louis Lortie | Truls Mørk

For this eighth and final volume of his Chopin series, Louis Lortie has chosen a programme that spans the composer's entire career, from the teenage Rondo, Op. 1, to his final published piece, the Cello Sonata, Op. 65, in which the pianist is partnered by Truls Mørk.

CHAN 20361



A VISION IN A DREAM - CONCERTOS BY EDWARD GREGSON

Soloists | BBC Philharmonic Orchestra
Ben Gernon

Edward Gregson features as solo pianist as well as composer in two pieces interspersing three of his major concertos: the Tuba Concerto, *Three Goddesses* (Viola Concerto), and *A Vision in a Dream* (Oboe Concerto).

CHAN 20356



Bliss: Miracle in the Gorbals Metamorphic Variations

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra | Michael Seal

Miracle in the Gorbals was a tremendous hit for Bliss and the Sadler's Wells Ballet company. First performed in 1944, it was repeated in every season through to 1950. Two of the sixteen movements of *Metamorphic Variations* were dropped before the first performance and not re-instated at any of the later performances of the work until that given by Michael Seal and the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra in February 2025, the day before they made this recording.

CHSA 5370

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